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The
PROCEEDINGS
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Unitarian Historical Society

ECUMENICITY AND LIBERTY:

*The Contribution of Henry W. Bellows to the
Development of Post-Civil War Unitarianism*

BY FRANK WALKER

MINOT JUDSON SAVAGE: *Rebuilder of Faith*

BY CHARLES W. McGEHEE

THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL PARKER

BY HERBERT E. HUDSON

JOHN GOODWIN AND JOHN BIDDLE:

Rational Theology and the Transformation of Puritanism

BY CLARK KUCHEMAN

A NOTE ON GEORGE RIPLEY AND THE BEGINNINGS
OF NEW ENGLAND TRANSCENDENTALISM

BY JETER A. ISELY AND ELIZABETH R. ISELY

FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY: *A Bibliography*

BY JURGEN HERBST

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1960-1961

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VOLUME XIII • PART II

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ECUMENICITY AND LIBERTY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF HENRY W. BELLOWES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF POST-CIVIL WAR UNITARIANISM *

BY FRANK WALKER

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Fulbright and Hibbert Scholar, Harvard Divinity School, 1958-59

Dr. Samuel Johnson, the English Tory high churchman, in characterizing the English so-called 'metaphysical poetry' of the seventeenth century declared that in it "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together." It is a judgment that he might equally well have made, with equal asperity, if he had been called upon to do so, upon the post-Civil War variety of Unitarianism. Anyone who investigates the history of the American Unitarians in this period very quickly becomes aware of its 'metaphysical' — in the Johnsonian sense — qualities, and perhaps in his bewilderment before this rich confusion the historian is tempted to follow the example of certain modern philosophers and 'eliminate metaphysics' altogether, to replace the disturbing tangle of heterogeneity with one easy clear homogeneous pattern. Indeed this seems to be the besetting vice of some of our historians. Often Unitarian history is written as though it were simply the unfolding of one primary theme, or we write biographies of individual heroes who all turn out to have much the same face; somehow a dreadful 'much of a muchness' seems to be perpetrated. Or, looking back with modern preconceived notions of 'liberalism' there is a popular tendency to stereotype the tradition: Channing, Emerson, Parker, O. B. Frothingham, Corliss Lamont — so the quasi-Apostolic Succession goes — and woe to those who have committed the 'sin of schism' and do not fit in. We apologize for them, their theologies embarrass us, their liberalism seems doubtful, suspicion is thrown on the validity of their 'orders' which are, it seems, in any case of somewhat defective 'intention,' and with relief they are relegated to the decent obscurity of the Unitarian Historical Library, or embalmed transfixed in the pages of Earl Morse Wilbur. The most that can be said for some of them, it seems, is that in their dotage they were becoming a little more liberal.

* Adapted from a paper read before the Spring Seminar of the Unitarian Historical Society, April 16, 1959, in Arlington, Mass.

The result is that our history is emasculated, our conflicts lose their real interest when the 'Apostolic Succession' is seen as obviously and inevitably, always and in every way right, and their opponents shown as men of straw, naive, hopelessly reactionary, or suffering from a peculiarly deadly form of invincible ignorance. Charles Lowe, Henry Bellows, Frederic Henry Hedge, James Freeman Clarke, William G. Eliot, Rufus Stebbins are names which no longer conjure up any clear images, however pleasant or uncongenial. Who, indeed, nowadays, has heard of Henry Whitney Bellows? — the man whom Hedge described as "our bishop, our metropolitan," and who in the opinion of Cyrus Bartol was "the only leader the Unitarian body has ever had." Who were Hedge and Bartol anyway? Lost in the mists of a not very fashionable century. In spite of his relative obscurity Bellows was the founder of American Unitarianism as a national denomination, and established with his friends, notably Frederic Henry Hedge and James Freeman Clarke, a central tradition in American Unitarianism which is of continuing vitality and relevance. So an examination of his life and thought is not merely a conventional exercise in pious hagiography; it may be a re-establishing of communications with someone whose work laid down the conditions for the continuing growth of American Unitarianism and whose thought may aid us in our attempt to take true measure of the denominational tensions of our own day, plot our positions on the maps of history and theology, and so chart a course that will save either side of the Unitarian ship from being dashed on the rocks.

Bellows was a genuine Bostonian, though never a 'proper' one, born in Boston on June 11, 1814, dying in New York on January 30, 1882. His mother died in his infancy. His father John Bellows was a Boston merchant, rich until near the close of his life. The large family were all carefully educated and accustomed to plenty, even luxury. In the last year of his life Bellows wrote a long autobiographical letter containing much interesting information:

I was sent to boarding school, to Wm. Jacob Knapp, at Jamaica Plain, at 7 years old; passed my 9th year at Walpole — my first acquaintance with the country. . . . At 10, I was sent to Round Hill School with my twin brother, & spent four years there, under Bancroft and Cogswell. Was fitted for Harvard at 13 but entered at 14 — in 1828 — graduated 1832. . . . Leaving College at 18, my father sent me out to Cooperstown, N.Y. where my brother John had a young ladies School, to assist him . . . taught French, German, Italian [,] Latin, Greek, Mathematics; lectured to the girls and spent a year of romance.

In 1834 I entered the Divinity School . . . But your Uncle Edward Everett, got track of me, & invited me to leave the School & go to Louisiana as a tutor. . . . The temptation of the journey — and the offer of a handsome salary (my father had lost nearly all his wealth though not a competency, in my Junior year) which fell in with my longing for independence — prevailed, & I went, & had an invaluable experience of Southern life on a plantation — besides living in a noble Library & doing more historic study & reading than I was ever able to accomplish in any year since. I returned to Cambridge &

entered the Divinity School in 1835. I resolved on independence & cut loose from parental support; took pupils, Became a College proctor; studied, taught, read & worked like a beaver — having 6 boys in my room all the morning . . . and working half the night. The criticism of the New Testament was a revelation to me, & I enjoyed the metaphysical part of theology; became a careful student of extempore speech; wrote piles of useless notes of lectures (a very great waste of time) have loads of notebooks that are of no use. The religious tone of the School was good, because Henry Ware made it so. Theodore Parker was there — but I had no radicalism in my nature & was not attracted by his roughness. On leaving the School . . . I was induced to go to Mobile, Ala., by Rev. Ephraim Peabody, to take charge of a congregation he had gathered. I was not ordained & went as an Evangelist. . . . My six or eight months in Mobile was delightful. . . . I was urged to stay on a salary of \$3,000 at Mobile — but the awful shadow of Slavery frightened me away. I had a 100 slaves in the galleries & preached on the duties of Masters & Servants. I felt alarmed at the mitigation of my horror of slavery, under the actual experience of many of its good features[.] I wished to preserve my New England hostility to it — & I fled. . . . came back to New England, & the following November never having candidated anywhere, was called to New York. Dr. Channing, Dr. Walker, & Dr. Ware, Jr. were all urgent I should go & even the Professors urged that I had been designed by them for New York during my studies. It was dreadfully against my grain. I disliked New York, I was somewhat delicate in health; I wanted a country parish — but I acquiesced in the wishes of the parish & the counsel of my advisers. . . . I was ordained & settled, Jan. 2, 1839 . . . Pastor of the then poor & divided downtown congregation of the First Congregational Church in New York. . . . I was settled on a Salary of \$2500 a year (which never supported me) married the next August 1839 Eliza Townsend of New York & soon had 5 children — of whom I lost 3 before they were 5 years old. How bitter those griefs were.

My parish flourished from the start. I was an indefatigable sermonizer, & visiting pastor, knew every family & was welcomed soon into the best literary Society; became a member (one of about 20) of the Sketch Club, the chief center of Literature & Art — & the mother of the Century, I think in my third year of residence; began to lecture & to speak on public occasions & soon attained a certain position, rare to the fortunes of men under 30. After 4 years in Chamber St. we built the Church of the Divine Unity (a year or two being spent betwixt the Sale of our church and the occupation of the New one in Apollo Hall — which I utilized by a long course of extempore lectures, on theological questions — which led to many conversions & gave me some of my best supporters in after years). We stayed only seven years in our new church — it being just at the time when the uptown flood was running strongest — . . . moved in 1854 into the Church of All Souls. Greatly to our advantage though at a heavy expenditure of capital when I came, the Chamber St. Church, which cost \$28,000, had now been paid for. When sold it left after mortgages & debts only \$7,000 in the Treasury. The new Church cost \$90,000. We paid all but \$28,000 at once — & that soon after by prodigious exertions on my part. The Church of All Souls cost about \$170,000 & and it was many years before this large debt, I think near \$100,000 was paid off. The anxiety & labor & personal attention these church-building & church-debt matters cost me I will not dwell on — but they were serious parts of my experience.

I shall always consider my experience as a Preacher & Pastor, & my influence in the Congregation of the First Church in New York the real backbone of my career — the best, the hardest, the most persistent & coherent part of my life — & the one which has exacted most from my mind & heart. I was here in a strange city (an exile it seemed, & it continues to seem so in part) in a camp of hostile sects, that were agreed in little except their dislike, distrust or abhorrence of our faith. It required real courage to be a Unitarian layman in New York in those days — a minister was a sort of clerical outlaw. Then our Unitarian body was torn with all sorts of divisions & seemed going to pieces. My own opinions had all to be reexamined & laid deep in personal conviction. I had to make my own theology; and to fight the worldliness, conformity, bigotry, materialism & in short the Philistinism of this Metropolis. It nearly killed me. At the end of 10 years I fainted dead away in the pulpit & did not recover my health for nearly a year — all from nervous exhaustion & over-work. But more & more, the Congregation increased, toughened, & took on an individuality, which at length became known & felt. It has been for 25 years, a solid, self-respecting, free, reverent body of men & women second to none in the city in influence & dignity & in faith. The number of rare souls that have been connected with us, is incredible; and the weight & influence our members have had in the life of the city & country is . . . exceptional. To have helped in this result is the glory & joy of my life.

The Antioch College enterprise, cost my people at least \$50,000 & me ten years & more of grave responsibility. The rumpus my public address on the Drama made, was perhaps the turning point of public opinion, in regard to the relation of Public Amusements, to Morals & Religion . . . & it took all my courage to do it.

The Cambridge discourse on "the Suspense of faith" kicked up almost a National controversy.

My course of Lowell Lectures was popular & did some good.

The war brought me into the Sanitary Commission, which I originated & conducted & poured all the executive administrative power I had into it not merely for four years — but for ten years after. It never was able to disband until 1879 — from the amount of unfinished business its affairs involved . . .

What my relations, as organizer with a few others, yourself & Lowe, of our National Conference — & our Ministerial Institute, & my general relations to the Unitarian body you know all about it. As Editor of the *Liberal Christian*, and of the *Christian Examiner* I did especially in the newspaper, no end of steady work — & I think I have had as much as most the office & privilege of keeping up the heart, hope, & activity of our Body, as well of holding its extremes together when it required all the sacrifice, energy & courage the best men had to do it.¹

After the war Bellows' energies went into the formation and sustaining of the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches. The mere catalogue of his other interests and labors is impressive. He had founded in 1847 *The Christian Inquirer*, a weekly newspaper and journal which served the needs of Unitarians outside Boston. There is no doubt that through this paper there was built up a closer connection between the

Unitarian churches of the Middle Atlantic States and the way prepared for the closer and more effective co-operation that was to come. Until his death Bellows remained manager and a frequent contributor. In 1865 the paper's name was changed to *The Liberal Christian*, as more suitable for the organ of the coming broad liberal church of America whose herald and growing point Bellows had hoped the National Conference was to be. From 1865 to 1871 he served as editor of the *Christian Examiner* perhaps the most brilliant journal ever produced by the American Unitarians, and throughout his life was a frequent contributor to it. His founding of the National Conference led to his inspiring the establishment of Unitarian Regional Conferences in 1866. He was a founder member of the Union League Club, the Harvard Club of New York, the New York Historical Society, and in 1876 he founded the Ministers' Institute for the promotion of critical and independent studies in theology and religion. His work in raising funds and directing the policy of Antioch College, the Meadville Theological School and Harvard Divinity School and rousing public concern on their behalf cannot be over-estimated. From 1877 to the end of his life he threw himself into the work of Civil Service reform, attacking the corrupt spoils system of the day and becoming the first president of the New York Civil Service Reform Association. A brilliant extempore speaker he was much in demand as a preacher before the National Conference, at ordinations and installations, especially those at the National Church at Washington, D. C., and at the dedication of new churches. After this brief account of his life we turn to what is, after his creation of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, the second great practical achievement of his life, the formation of the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches.

From about 1780 to 1840 there existed in the neighborhood of Boston a group of liberal Christian churches of the old standing order, which had reluctantly yet heroically accepted the name 'Unitarian' early in the nineteenth century, but which all substantially adhered to that tradition within Christian thought which, for want of a better term, is called 'supernatural rationalism' — so much illumined for us recently by Dr. Conrad Wright's researches — all enjoying a respectable, prosperous and united existence. True, Mr. Emerson had been beset by doubts concerning the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and had preached the latest form of infidelity in 1838, but since then he had withdrawn from the ministry as he and his former colleagues considered was only fitting and decent. In 1841 this happy respectability and unity were disturbed by the Rev. Theodore Parker's notorious South Boston Sermon. But unlike Mr. Emerson

Mr. Parker insisted on retaining in all the ways that he could his connection with the Unitarians, and maintained that his views, opinions, and doctrines were not imported, — not the result of his study of German theologians and

philosophers, — but the logical result of the New England theology. This made his influence damaging to Unitarianism, excited afresh the prejudices of the orthodox against it, and obtained for him sympathy and a large following, both of clergy and laity, among the Unitarians themselves.²

So complained Dr. Samuel K. Lothrop, sometime minister of the Brattle Street Church and President of the American Unitarian Association. "This outbreak, if I may call it so, of Mr. Parker," he added

disintegrated the clergy and the whole body of Unitarians, and dealt a blow from which Unitarianism has not, and probably as a religious denomination, never will recover. . . . Since then the Unitarian Congregationalists as a body have never been a unit, as they were during the first forty years of this century.³

The Unitarian 'body' as the Victorians always called it, had sprouted two wings, and was never again to get rid of them. Unity was gone, the old familiar patterns had been broken up, bitter intra-mural theological conflict had set in, and in the eyes of older men anarchy and stagnation seemed to threaten. In 1860, Dr. Ezra Stiles Gannett wrote to the Rev. R. L. Carpenter in England, "I cannot tell you — for I do not think anyone can tell — how theological or ecclesiastical matters stand with us."⁴ And again in 1862 he lamented, "The palmy days of Unitarianism have gone by, union and co-operation have yielded to individualism, and the 'Liberal Theology' of the present time embraces opinions of every sort, from semi-Trinitarianism to ultra-Parkerism."⁵ The palmy days of a clear homogeneous Unitarian theology had indeed gone by. What happened after the Civil War made it impossible for anyone any longer to identify Unitarianism in S. K. Lothrop's fashion as simply a church with a different method of interpretation of Scripture from other Christian churches. The threatened disintegration which was claimed as an inevitable outcome of the presence of Parkerism and Transcendentalism within Unitarianism was stifled by the outbreak of the Civil War. The anarchic genius of the Transcendentalists was forced to come to terms with the decision-demanding actualities of the war. The Unitarians who had been inwardly torn by two decades of acute theological controversy, all the more alarming since it was so new and unprepared for, plunged headlong with relief into the practical work of the war. "The war has proved that our Unitarian faith works well in time of trial," remarked William G. Eliot: "no other church has been so uniformly and thoroughly loyal, and no other church has done more for the sick and the dying." A new spirit demanding more corporate unity and more vigorous missionary action grew out of the war. In the words of Dr. Gannett, "The war taught people to do and to give, and now they turn their awakened energies into channels nearer home."⁶ As far as Unitarians were concerned these awakened energies bore fruit when five days before the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox, on April 7, 1865 there assembled in All Souls Church, New York City, a National Convention of Unitarian Churches, a unique event in

Unitarian history, and in effect the foundation of American Unitarianism as a national denomination, due primarily to the initiative and boundless energy and loyalty of Henry Bellows. If he had done nothing but this Bellows would still deserve to be honored as the real founder of modern Unitarianism. The steps whereby so decisive an event was brought about deserve to be carefully recounted.

On December 6-7, 1864 a special meeting of the American Unitarian Association was held in Boston's Hollis Street Church, under the presidency of Dr. Rufus P. Stebbins. Dr. Bellows urged the importance of a more effective organization of Unitarianism. It was decided that an appeal for \$100,000 should be made for missionary purposes, and Dr. Bellows' proposal "that a committee of ten persons, three ministers and seven laymen, should be appointed to call a convention, to consist of the pastor, and two delegates from each church or parish in the Unitarian denomination, to meet in the city of New York to consider the interests of our cause and to institute measures for its good" ⁷ was unanimously adopted. By the time the convention met the \$100,000 had been all but collected. The enormous difficulties presented in the attempt to organize so individualistic and recalcitrant a group of people as the American Unitarians, the frustration, exasperation and heartache of it all are revealed in the numerous letters Bellows wrote to prominent Unitarian leaders of the time, now in the keeping of the Massachusetts Historical Society. A ministerial triumvirate seems to have done most of the work: Bellows' right-hand man in Boston was the Rev. Edward Everett Hale, then minister of the South Congregational Church, Dr. James Freeman Clarke being the other partner. In September 1864 Bellows had written to President Livermore of Meadville:

... my hope of the School is however mainly dependent on the general success of our efforts to reorganize the *whole* Denomination. Until our separate Churches have a warmer and more cooperative Church life, until a Church means more & does more for its members — our rich laity will not much care whether there are any *more* ministers of the same torpid & cold sort that we have so many of, — or not. Everything in our future — our Schools, our Periodicals, our National extension, our growth in Religious Life — depends upon a reorganization of our individual churches. ⁸

Bellows was highly critical of the older generation of ministers who seemed to him unenthusiastic and unaware of the opportunities for Liberal Christianity in America. They had no sympathy with the wants of the common people in this raw democratic country. Proper, passionless and half-English they had no grasp of American wants and the religious consciousness of American Christians. After the December meeting of the American Unitarian Association he wrote to Hale:

I heard from some not very trustworthy sources, that the larger plan *we* proposed, struck the majority of our ministers as quixotic, & that they anticipated

nothing but failure from its undertaking. This, if true, would not surprise me. Our people are accustomed to tithe mint and rue, & if any body proposes to exact 'customs' from a large & universal field, it is looked at as a wild scheme . . . we have exhausted the prudential supports & resources of our Cause. Benj. Franklin cant help us. We must now take the rashness of faith, hope & charity for our helpers, commit members to a bold & unreserved policy, & call on God and the Holy Spirit to give us success. I see nothing but sure decay for our cause, in the sybaritic sloth, the Sadducean Skepticism, the contented respectability, that now clothes its older members. We must get out of this, somehow. I propose to cut out, with any necessary amount of confusion & finger-pointing — & I find a certain number who are anxious and willing to go in. Let us organize what is not in too "fatty a state of degeneration" to be organizable. ⁹

In January he wrote again "five years of our present apathy, divisions, & meditations on our own navel will kill us sure — if we are not dead now."

The proposed Convention of 1865 broke new ground in that it was *national* — the beginning of a determined attempt to de-Bostonize Unitarianism which Bellows strongly supported. It was an organization of *churches* as distinct from individuals, unlike the then A. U. A., and also for the first time the *laymen* were invited to meet as a national body and help to frame denominational policy on a national scale. Bellows was deeply concerned that the laymen should make their voice heard in the Convention. "If the matter rested with the ministers," he wrote, "I should despair. But behind them I feel a budding life in our *laity*, from which I hope much." ¹⁰ He felt that the older men had given up hope of any wide success for Unitarianism.

The leading Pastors want to hang on to their parishes, conduct them in their own way, & have none of the cares — anxieties of cooperation work. "Apré moi le déluge" appears to be their unconscious motto. You cant get Walker or George Ellis, or Robbins, or Bartol to take hold with any faith or courage. Hedge is a philosopher & ill-fitted for *action*. Clarke and Hale, with a considerable body of the younger men, are ready to *try* & believe something can be done . . . I think half our ministers in our best parishes would stay away from the Convention, some from apathy, some from fear of being committed to something, some from a hatred of *drill*, some from radical distrust of Christianity itself, some from jealousy of New York — if their parishes were not, by an instinct of self-preservation, pressing them forward. . . . It will be almost equally instructive as a failure, & as a success. If it fails, it will prove I think, the radical hostility of our Body, to Organized effort; & from that hour, a more thorough disintegration will take place & a more decisive line be drawn between the radical and the conservative wings. If it succeeds, we shall find *in work*, as I think, a resolution for many or most of our difficulties & take a *national* start for the first time in our Liberal Christian work. ¹¹

On March 1 he wrote a letter to his son in which he gives a fascinating analysis of the various parties within Unitarianism in 1865, and their attitudes to the Convention. He had visited Boston the previous week for a pulpit exchange and a meeting of ministers, and says:

Our body seemed divided into four sections. 1. *The elder men*, old fashioned Unitarians, very *ethical* in their humor — preaching the doctrine of self-culture & personal righteousness. This part is identified with Boston respectability, and is opposed to all *vulgar publicity* & popular methods of arousing attention. Moreover it is very Congregational — sticklers for *individual* independence in the churches, & very little disposed to expect great things, or to undertake large enterprises. It is conservative too, & very spiteful towards the transcendental or radical wings, and pretty jealous of anything which don't originate in Boston. I think Dr. Gannett may be considered as the head of this section, & George Ellis, Lothrop, Thompson, Hill of Worcester, are specimens of it. 2. Next we have a pretty large section of Radicals — transcendental in their philosophy, unhistorical in their faith — men like Frothingham, Longfellow, Potter of New Bedford & a strong body of young men just out of Divinity Studies — who really think Christianity only one among a great many other Religions, excellent in their way, & in fact doubt if there be not something better *coming*. These men are shy of Convention — thinking some test may be applied, some creed slipped round them. They take great alarm at any suggestion of any standard of faith — however generous, but are partly willing to co-operate on some platform of *work* which has no doctrine in it. 3. We have another *small section* of Evangelicals, who believe that Jesus Christ was a strictly miraculous person & a savior indeed, of whom Rufus Ellis, Mr. Sears & a very few others are samples — who want to *secede* & are disposed to deny any fellowship with the looser & more liberal party. 4. We have another set of *Broad Church men*, like J. F. Clarke, Dr. Hedge, E. E. Hale — & numerous others — who recognize the elements of truth in all the other doctrines, & believe in the possibility of welding them together & with this party I belong, and am working. With it, too, must necessarily work all of each of the other sections, not strong enough or pronounced enough in their own views to be very set & obstinate.

. . . I incline to think none of the other sections has enough backing in the *people*, to resist the fourth. For this is the hopeful part of the business. The convention calls *two* laymen for one clergyman into the convention, and it may be said to be the first chance for the lay element in our Denomination, to develop its consciousness, & learn to articulate its experience or its wants. I am not sanguine enough to suppose that the laity in the Liberal Christian body have very distinct ideas of their wants — But I think they cannot sympathize with a large part of the refinements, discriminations, & prejudices of the clergy. I think there must be a healthier tone of thought & one of a more practical character. . . . My suspicion is that for want of lay co-operation & interchange of views between ministers & people the pulpit and the pews are getting alienated from each other, and the ministers correspondingly ineffective and unsustained. One thing is plain: the idea of the Convention has aroused the Unitarian Denomination, as never before; aroused the laity, who are stirring in the raising of money, and who seem in many cases to be far before the clergy in faith & zeal.¹²

Bellows and Hale were frequently sickened and exasperated by the Boston clergy. "The inability," exclaimed Hale "to make these people see that there is a country or a church outside of this ten mile circle is awful. . . . I do not dare to put on paper my sense of the unreligiousness of some

of these men and of much of their vaunted literature and culture.”¹³ Hale made no secret that for him one aim of the Convention was the transfer of the Unitarian sceptre out of New England. In another letter to his son in March 22, 1865, Bellows gives an account of the denominational temper, and his proposals for dealing with it:

Desire for *organization*, and, *hostility* to it. Fear of being trapped into some *restrictive system*, & fear of being dispersed into nonentity by want of system; jealousy of New York, & anxiety to find a leader, & reluctance to accept one when found; a notion on one side, that we can co-operate without agreeing in *ideas*, on the other, a doubt how “two can walk together unless they are agreed” — Hatred of test & forms & fixtures; a readiness of generalities & licence & looseness; a feeling that our antecedents have all been averse to close & corporate life; another feeling that it is just that which has prevented our progress & now predicts our decease. These are the antagonistic elements in the case. They must be partly humored & partly controlled. I believe in coaxing & compromise up to a certain point — & then in vigor & grasp & command. I favor *as much* organization as the Body will *bear* — & would not mind scraping some cheek-bones in Squeezing on the Yoke. We have boundless liberty in our body; but the colt out to pasture so long, is now to be hitched to a cart & put to the Road, the meanwhile kicks at the traces, refuses to pull, & declines being harnessed with any sober beasts to draw any common load.¹⁴

Bellows' ecumenical vision was of the National Conference as the germ of a great broad liberal Church of America, and thought that it might be the providential mission of the Unitarians to accomplish this, “a Really Broad Church, . . . inviting Churches of all sorts outside who believe in Religious liberty to co-operate . . . broad enough to include all who will consent to allow perfect liberty & independence of opinion under Christ.”¹⁵ This is clearly evident in the constitution which he drew up for the General Assembly of the Liberal Christian Church of America which exists in manuscript. E. E. Hale shared this outlook, and in a letter to Bellows says he would have preferred “Free Christian Church” as the name for the body that the Convention was to create:

Clarke dislikes the word *Liberal*, but dislikes *Unitarian* more & *National* more. I prefer “Free Christian Church” to anything — But we are both *amenable* & the others assent without any hesitation to your suggestion — “The Assembly of the Liberal Christian Church of America” . . . The Address . . . instead of being offered to the churches who constitute this convention . . . if it is offered to the Nation as a statement of what on the whole the next convention is called for & this convention desires.

Given the call to the next Convention wide enough to include all Liberal Orthodox Churches — (& this seems to me of the first importance) & all our present Convention also, the Address or Statement may contain as positive a Christian declaration as you or I would think of asking. On such a basis as that — if we were well rid of the word *Unitarian* in the title to the Convention, I would engage in twelve months to find up six — 100 churches now existing — (Independent Methodist — independent this that and another) who would

send delegates to another Convention — And as you say — with such accession it becomes of no great consequence to us where our Gorillas go.¹⁶

Bellows was never doctrinaire, and he had no wild dreams that he was to inaugurate a broad Liberal Church immediately. If such was to come it would be, in his view, through a re-vitalized and co-operative Unitarian denomination which he saw as the seed capable of growing into his dream. Therefore he was always willing to compromise in nonessentials in order to keep the Unitarian 'body' strong and healthy. The question of the Statement of Principles or Articles of Faith which the convention should make was of fundamental importance. In 1865 Bellows saw the need for some simple positive statement if a new organization was to be created, but it was to be a "broad general statement of fundamental principles, without any attempt to fasten any body by a hair to what he dont want to be hitched to."¹⁷ From the beginning he held to the position that "whatever statement of opinion . . . the convention may adopt, is to be considered only as the opinion of the Majority of this Body, & in no way as trespassing upon the rights of opinions of the minority or committing them to its statements."¹⁸

Stow Persons' account of the convention in his invaluable book *Free Religion* seems open to criticism. He says that Bellows and the conservatives were determined to secure organization around a creed acceptable to the more wealthy and influential Unitarians, and implies that they intended to smash the radicals. Professor Persons can cite documentary evidence to support this view of the 1865 Convention, and the 1866 Conference, or 'Battle of Syracuse' as it became known, but taking into consideration Bellows' later actions and his own character, it seems to be a misinterpretation of Bellows' motives. Bellows' fundamental aim in 1865 was to create a viable organization on a definite Christian basis of the simplest kind acceptable to the great bulk of the churches and the widest degree of liberty and freedom for the private conscience. As he wrote in an article of 1868 in the *Christian Examiner* on the National Conference:

Both poles of the implied compact, when the Convention was originally called, were to be sacredly respected, — the pole of faith in Christ; the pole of Christian liberty for each church and each individual. Faith in Christ was to be affirmed as the faith of the National Conference. Individual churches and persons were to be thrown wholly on their own consciences and will in interpreting the preamble . . . the union was a moral union.¹⁹

He could not allow the 'gorillas' or radicals in 1865 to jeopardize the whole undertaking. Neither is it correct to label Bellows a conservative as Persons does. He was both radical and conservative and belonged to a powerful mediating group whose executive arm in the A. U. A. was Charles Lowe, and who steered a course between radical and conservative extremes, prevented the threatened splits in the denominations from becoming institutionalized, and kept the body intact.

Bellows considered the 1865 Convention "an absolute and entire success. . . . Our denomination is saved. We have finished up Naturalism and Transcendentalism and Parkerism."²⁰ He spoke too soon. But his letter to Hale after the convention shows his relief and joy that a substantial body has been created.

Our denomination is an *ostrich*, with a very heavy Body & very *small* wings. We have been taking it for a night-hawk, all wings & next to no body. It matters not what our wings do or dont — they may flap or hang, or drop off & we shall go along just as well. Prove as we have proved, that we dont care a button what they do & they will behave. That is what the convention has taught us.

Moreover, our people mean to have *liberty* & not *license*, and Christianity at any rate. They love the *Church* and the sober faith of devout believers, & and as much liberty as saves both.²¹

The Convention carried out what Bellows had planned should be its work: approved the efforts of the A. U. A. to raise \$100,000 for missionary purposes, encouraged a fresh supply of ministers by appealing for \$100,000 for Antioch College, considered the claims of Meadville and Harvard also, and the creation of a newspaper, the *Liberal Christian*.

Bellows had fought for his compromise basis for the National Conference against the radicals in 1865 and in 1866. The disappointment of the radicals at Syracuse in 1866 led to the founding of the Free Religious Association in 1867. There seemed a possibility that the 'wings' were becoming institutionalized and might in time separate from the 'body.' The next challenge to the 'body's' integrity came from the conservative side in the attempt of the so-called "new-movement men" to fasten a creed or statement of faith on the A. U. A. and the National Conference which would oust the radicals. Bellows now showed the radical side of his nature and fought for his compromise position against the conservatives. By 1870 the conservatives were becoming alarmed by the growth of radicalism and were very dissatisfied with Article Nine of the National Conference's constitution which stated: "All declarations of the Conference including the Preamble are expressions only of its majority, committing in no way those who object to them . . ." ²² George Hepworth was the leader in the move to draw up a Statement of Faith, and there was also a movement to establish an Evangelical Unitarian Association to offset the Free Religious Association to which those dissatisfied with the National Conference could withdraw. Rufus Stebbins claimed that the National Conference no longer represented Unitarians, and Hepworth urged that the denomination be put on a Christian platform without any reservations by expunging the ninth Article, drawing up an enlarged Statement of Faith as the Preamble, or, perhaps, by forming a new association. By his speeches in May and October of 1870 Bellows prevented the conservatives, both at the A. U. A. May meetings

and at the National Conference, from fastening upon Unitarians a creed-like statement that would exclude the radicals.

Suppose you cut off by your creed (as you must) either side of the denomination; suppose you cut off the older conservative side, and by cutting them off you leave your body without spiritual eyes, for you would to a very large extent, — what would you have to cut off next? The so-called “Free Religionists” by any creed that this body is prepared to accept. Suppose you cut them off; what have you left? God knows I do not like many of their statements, but I am glad to have them in the Unitarian body. I believe a large part of the spiritual life of the denomination lies in the very men whose theological opinions many of us most utterly reject. . . . Let us keep these men among us; don’t let us drive away any of the men who for any reason are in their own consciences and in their own hearts able to work with us and willing to work with us. ²³

In critical situations Bellows stood firm as a mediator. At the time of the Year Book Controversy in 1874 he offered a resolution at the National Conference — which was passed unanimously — endorsing the action of the officers of the Conference in inviting W. J. Potter’s New Bedford church to send official delegates. Bellows’ generous inclusive spirit is summed up in this extract from a speech he gave before the National Conference in 1870:

It has been my fate on several occasions, in this Conference, to make great sacrifices of personal feeling, and to place myself in an attitude of most painful suffering to me, in defending the rights of both sides of this body. And whenever there has been any movement on the conservative side to crush out the liberty to which we are all entitled, as members of this Conference I have risked my own reputation for consistency, in the eyes of many people, by jumping with all the weight that there was in my feet or in my body, or in my soul, into the breach that seemed to me to be about to divide our denomination.

After all that I have said — absolutely necessary and compulsory, as a believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, . . . we owe an unspeakable debt of gratitude to our radical brethren — to the transcendental influence which they have infused into the Unitarian body, and that we must date the revival of this body to the time when they, in their sense of the efficacy of the spirit of God, and drunk with the enthusiasm of that glorious idea, for a time lost sight of the fact that the Church rests upon Jesus Christ as its corner stone, and attempted to remove the Church to their standpoint. I recollect perfectly well when the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of God were very gingerly mentioned in the Unitarian body. There was a greater heresy in the Unitarian body when I came into it than there is now. I was brought up on a high and dry Unitarianism, and plagued little did I ever hear of an immediate and informing spirit of God; very little did I hear of the spirit helping my infirmities. . . . I am willing, before God, to bear whatever odium belongs to protecting, and to loving a body of men such as those whom we have in some degree been cold-shouldering. ²⁴

On July 19, 1859 the alumni of the Harvard Divinity School met for their annual meeting, the chief event of which, an address by Henry Bellows

upon "The Suspense of Faith," was somewhat delayed by a never-to-be-forgotten interchange between Moncure D. Conway and the older alumni over the resolution moved by Conway and seconded by J. F. Clarke that those present should express their sympathy with Theodore Parker in his desperate illness. Dr. Gannett objected to the resolution as unprecedented, Dr. Hedge resented it as a subtle way of forcing the alumni either to applaud Parker and his theology or appear cruel and heartless; many considered it as implying approval of Parker's views and out of place. Eventually the meeting was adjourned without the resolution's being put to the vote. Apparently Dr. Bellows was silent during this debate, but in the *Christian Inquirer* of August 13 he made reference to the occasion and to Parker in no uncertain terms. Perhaps his opposition to Parker at this time was a factor contributing to his relegation to relative obscurity in later times. At all events, the delivery of the address on *The Suspense of Faith* is all but forgotten save by a few specialist historians, though described by a twentieth century non-Unitarian historian as "one of the most significant in Unitarian history,"²⁵ and creating an unusually high degree of interest and controversy in its time.

The address falls broadly into two parts; first, an acute and prophetic analysis of the facts and tendencies, the characteristic ideas positive and negative of the mid-nineteenth century and of American Unitarianism; and second, a proposal of remedies for the evils and deficiencies previously diagnosed.

The Nineteenth Century he denominates, with a pleasing anticipation of the phraseology of a later theologian, the Protestant Era, apart from which the history, position and future of Unitarianism cannot be considered. Unitarianism he represents as being never before so popular and numerous, and yet there exists an unmistakable chill in missionary zeal, apathy, despondency, self-questioning, anxiety. Why should this be, he asks, and goes on to give particular, general and universal reasons for a common suspense of faith. The particular cause of the loss of a sense of urgency in Unitarian missionary work, and of a general indifference to attempts to increase Unitarian ministers and churches, he sees as the widespread acceptance of the principles Unitarians have stood for — principles of the rights of conscience, rationality of method, freedom of inquiry, and practical religion. On the one hand, there is a feeling that these principles are being sown broadcast by literature and the press, and, on the other hand, it seems that essentially Unitarian principles, often under another name, have so softened the current creed of orthodox Christendom that in the decline of the errors which it was born to balance, the purely denominational theology of Unitarianism seems more and more irrelevant and interest in it evaporates.

The general cause of the suspense he claims to be due to the relation of Unitarianism to Protestantism as the most Protestant part of Protestantism, carrying to their logical limits Protestant principles, tendencies and sentiments. The pause, therefore, of Unitarianism is the pause that Protestantism makes on awakening to full consciousness of her own tendencies. She is cautious and confused as she sees them leading she hardly knows whither. The sufficiency of Scripture is becoming the self-sufficiency of man, the right of private judgment tends to become absolute independence of Bible and Church, the objective scriptures are replaced by the intuitions of the heart, the claim that nothing should stand between man's conscience and God vacates the Church, the function of the Holy Spirit is usurped by private reason, the Church tends to be abandoned as an independent institution, Christianity denied as a supernatural revelation, worship extinguished as a separate interest.

This is the drift of the main Protestant current, which Unitarianism has most plainly indicated. The Unitarians are so severely criticized by orthodox Protestants precisely because they show so clearly where the rest are tending, such criticism is an unconscious self-criticism — a parent's blame of the hereditary taint it has communicated to its child.

If we wish to find the religious tendencies of this Protestant Age, Bellows declares, we must go not to its saints, but to the vast mass of the unchurched. There we will find a growing hostility to the Church manifested in the clash between science and religion, literature and theology, the transfer of the people's faith from the Church to education, the growth of a utilitarian morality, the rise of a ruling class with whom religious considerations have no sway. It is not an irreligious age, but an unreligious age, and it is becoming more unreligious. The Church tends to accommodate herself to the Age, and where interest in the Church exists it tends to be of a political, social and ethical nature. Secular morality is dignified as religion. The highest ambition of our modern pulpit is

to make a religion out of self-respect, right living, self-culture — to insist that aspiration is worship, that truth is God, that goodness is religion — I do not say it in blame, nor in scorn; for under the circumstances, it is an honorable ambition, laid upon men by the necessity of justifying their own faith to themselves.²⁶

Political and social idealism clothes itself in religious phraseology, and science, philosophy and literature are creating substitutes for religion.

Bellows warns his hearers that he is speaking of historical *tendencies*, *not* of historical inevitabilities. In accordance with his basically dialectical philosophy of history he asserts that these tendencies may be dangerous and yet providential, part of the work of God in history; dangerous as they

are they may be a wholesome reaction from tendencies even worse. Perhaps for too long Christendom has suffered from too much worship, of a kind that refuses to admit a proper degree of human freedom.

This leads Bellows on to discuss the third, universal or psychological cause of the suspense of faith. There are, he says, two motions of the human spirit in relation to God, the centrifugal and the centripetal. In the first, man goes away from God to learn his freedom; in the second, man is drawn back to God to receive inspiration, nurture, endowment. These two forces are at work in Christendom, the centrifugal in the world and the centripetal in the Church. Both of them, asserts Bellows — and this is very characteristic of his basic position — have truth on their side. The world upholds, asserts Humanity and its freedom, it makes man; the Church denounces Humanity as empty, declaring its only salvation is in God, and saves man. Within the Church herself, too, these twin forces operate. Protestantism, upholding man's internal liberty and individual freedom, and calling him to work, is man coming to himself and is centrifugal; Romanism, representing God's condescension to man and calling upon him to worship, is man going to the Father, and is centripetal.

The centrifugal tendency of Protestantism has reached its apogee, the swing of the pendulum has reached its bound, in the American Unitarians who have achieved the fullest freedom but do not know what to do with it. The result is the suspended animation from which the present generation so painfully suffers. Our men of genius, he says, become paralyzed by doubts, some retreat in fear into Romanism, and others, seeing the danger of this reaction, push on into an even more ultra-Protestantism, and with Mill and the Emersonians "acknowledge only one true movement in humanity, the self-asserting . . . movement."²⁷ Such people would dissolve the Church in the world; not a few hint that

the Church of the future will be the diffusion of a universal intelligence, in which natural laws shall take the place of bibles and prayer books, and Science and Art be the high and only priests.²⁸

There is nevertheless a deep sense of *want* among the devouter part of Protestantism which may indicate the conception, though not the birth, of a new religious epoch distinguished by faith. Bellows cannot believe that the nineteenth century, however important, is to be indefinitely continued: "this bustling, irreverent and self-asserting time," as he characterizes it, "an age that has to be busy to save itself from knowing its own destitution, to which leisure is a burden and solitude a calamity."²⁹

Bellows launches a memorable attack on the peculiar spirit, though not the distinctive achievements, of the mid-nineteenth century: its disintegrating individualism, "the esoteric want behind the exoteric abundance,"

"the cold polish, the brilliant surface, the dead enthusiasm of the best and most characteristic products of the nineteenth century, . . . its vulgar credulity and as vulgar incredulity . . . its unspirituality and spiritism; its no faith in the Old Testament and interest in the Mormon Bible and the Spiritual Telegraph." ³⁰ In such an age the inherited thought of a protestant epoch of 300 years is born tired and no wonder Newman and Brownson seek solace in the past and in the Roman Catholic Church. They make a valuable testimony to the worth of the fundamental idea of Catholicism, the condescension of God to Man, which Protestantism has lost sight of.

Having made his diagnosis, Bellows goes on to prescribe his remedy. This brings him at once to "the real question in all Protestant countries." With keen insight he realises that the question of the Church is basic and unavoidable for modern Liberal Protestantism. Is the Church indispensable or merely some superior kind of public convenience? "Have the external institutions of religion any authority but expediency? Do they stand for and represent anything but one portion of the human race educating another portion of the human race, which, in the last analysis, is self-culture?" ³¹ It is a very common and spreading feeling that our religious institutions are approaching their natural term of existence. If the school can educate better than the Church, says Bellows, it will supersede the Church. If the revelation of truth and duty to which the Church bears witness, has been dissolved into human reason, history and civilization, society is wiser than the Church, it has the gospel and the Church is unnecessary. But, answers Bellows, the gospel is not simply a revelation of truth, it is a communication of power and life given through the Church, which is not a reservoir which may be emptied, but a permanent conduit down which flows the river of God. The visible Church, says Bellows, demands our commitment because it alone is within our voluntary reach. Every important relationship of humanity is and must be embodied in an external institution; so we have the family, the society, the State, the Church. Against the reckless individualism of his time Bellows asserts the doctrine of institutions, the only instruments, except literature, and the blood, by which the riches of ages, the experience and wisdom of humanity are handed down.

As an individual, inorganic, unrelated independent being, man is unfulfilled. An individualistic interpretation of Christianity, ignoring the Church, is false.

That view of Christianity which makes it the magnificent outbirth of a great private individual, the Galilean peasant, saint, philosopher and seer; or, of the Gospel which makes it a business between one private man, namely, one's self, and another private man, Jesus Christ; or of religion which leaving out the bond that is the Church, makes it a matter between a man and his God; or of the Church which establishes it fundamentally in the personal experience and

worth of every good man, is a view false to the institution of humanity, the condition of man's historic existence and development . . . false to the wants, experience, instincts and imaginations of men.³²

The present task, declares Bellows, demands a lively recognition of the existing religious institutions as the chosen channel whereby the Divine Word is to find its earthly embodiment. It is vital that the Church should be upheld as a distinctive institution and not dissolved in the world.

The Transcendental philosophy which generalizes away all diverse concretes into monotonous abstractions and delights in making the secular and the sacred, the right and the wrong, the grave and the gay, the male and the female, the world and the church, the human and the divine, the natural and the supernatural, one and the same, pursues the exact reverse of the order of creation, which is a steady multiplication of distinctions, a growth of diversity, an ascent from roots into branches, twigs, flowers and fruits. The alleged simplification of our modern medico-philosophic theology is a simplicity like that which might unite and condense family life by dismissing the servants and burying the children.

Let the Church feel that it has a sphere quite as important as it can fill, in maintaining the worshipful and God-fearing affections — in supplying the purely religious wants of the people. I would have it undertake less, in order to do more. . . .³³

Bellows looks for a new Catholic Church — a Church in which the needed but painful experiences of Protestantism shall have taught us how to maintain a dignified, symbolic and mystic church-organization, without the aid of the State, or the authority of the Pope, as the answer to the demand of the weary unchurched humanity of our era. He ends by declaring his address as but an attempted articulation of the dumb wants of the time, perhaps one small step in the direction of that more fully and more truly Catholic Church.

Bellows was always a 'liberal' in the true sense of that word, a man of generous sympathies and wide inclusiveness, one of the "large roundabout souls" that he characterizes as liberal in his sermon before the Western Conference in 1855. He always maintained that the distinctively American genius was liberal, and that American Christianity must inevitably become liberal. In the midst of the drift towards incantation and anti-intellectualism he stood firmly for a positive and distinct theology. When we recall that even so intelligent a man as O. B. Frothingham could describe Transcendentalism in 1877, approvingly, in these terms:

Its data were secluded in the recesses of consciousness, out of the reach of scientific investigations, remote from the gaze of vulgar skepticism; esoteric, having about them the charm of a sacred privacy, on which common sense and the critical understanding might not intrude. Its oracles proceeded from a shrine, and were delivered by a priest or priestess, who came forth from an interior holy of holies to utter them³⁴

we may well feel that if this is what it was, then it fully deserved the conservatives' strictures. This sort of thing could and did lead to intellectual confusion and vapidty, on these principles there is no standard whereby to draw the line at quackery and charlatanism. Intellectual nonsense may disguise itself as 'spirituality,' and rhapsodic meaninglessness pass unchallenged as the deliverances of the intuition. The emergence of modern tough-minded humanism surely provided a welcome antidote to this private gnosticism. Bellows had an acute insight into the situation:

I fear one of two things — as the necessary result of this . . . indifference to Christian doctrine; either the galvanic revival of the system . . . or a sudden rush into rationalism, with a total abandonment of Christian faith and church institution. . . . I see the real Church of Christ, and the real faith of the Gospel torn asunder by their mutual antipathies — and our Lord again crucified between two murderers. I declare I do not know which to dread most, absolute infidelity, or a return to medieval creeds. My reason goes more with one; my affection with the other; my intellects here, my imagination there; my whole manhood with neither.³⁵

Rigid and exact thinking, Bellows claims, sound and clear logic, sharp discrimination, were the original weapons, and they are the permanent armory of the Unitarian cause. He felt acutely the dangers hidden within the decay of theological thinking:

Make light of opinion; allow it to be said that it matters not what men believe, if they are only sincere — that religion is a matter of the heart, theology of the head, and that we may properly stop up the communication between them — and you have announced the carnival of falsehood; you have invited all sorts of private notions and fancies, wild speculations and personal caprices, to come and occupy the Castle of Indolence into which you have turned the Temple of Truth. Thereupon, all fine discriminations, all vivid outlines, the painstaking accuracies of truth, are blurred over and lost. Men begin to mix up their knowledge and their guesses, their reflections and their fancies, their intellect and their passions. They confound imagination and fancy, reason and understanding, conscience and will, affection and passion, until they come to call anything true, that they wish to be true — anything good that they like — anything virtue, anything religion, that is bold enough to claim the name.³⁶

Bellows' essential theological position can be found very succinctly expressed in a phrase he used in an article for the *Christian Examiner* of 1868: "God in history, Christ in the Church, and the Church in the world." Bellows' faith is a historical faith, both in his sympathetic outreach to all manifestations in history of the Christian religion, and in the sense that he believed history was the arena of God's activity. "It is for the spiritual integrity of every individual to have sympathy enough with all the religious opinions of the world to understand the ground of their attraction."³⁷ Therefore the riches of the Christian past were precious to him and he was able to extend positive and sympathetic understanding to both medieval

Catholicism and the doctrinal formulation of the early Church, though no man was a more firm opponent of fixed creeds in his own day. His philosophy of history, as we have seen in *The Suspense of Faith*, is essentially dialectical, a matter of thrust and reaction, different epochs, creeds and institutions doing justice to different and neglected aspects of the truth and attempting to balance each other's deficiencies.

Because of his sense of history Bellows resisted the whole drift of Emerson and Parker which was to loose Christianity from its historical moorings, and appreciated much more keenly than they could the particularity of religion, something that even those like R. B. Braithwaite who see religion as essentially 'morality backed by a myth' have come to appreciate afresh. "That the people may have religion, they must have *a* religion."³⁸ He sees Christianity as a divinely appointed *means* enabling humanity to love God and man.

The human race sees in Christ a revelation of God and an access to Him . . . there is nothing new in the Gospel but Christ considered as the way to the Father. It is his presence in the world, associated with the religious aspirations and thinking of men which has made the Church possible, which has given practical heat and shaping power to Theism.³⁹

Bellows makes an urgent plea for 'positive' religion because he stands in dread of the anarchy which he believes is the result of anything less than positive historical religion.

We are beginning to see that religion is not a spontaneous self-protecting plant; . . . you must wear the voluntary yoke of a positive religion . . . You must not imagine that Christianity is everywhere and nowhere; everything and nothing; a vague sentiment; another name for virtue; the mere synonym of goodness and truth. It is a religion of facts, and historical, positive faith, supporting and illustrating and embodying its doctrines in the incidents of Christ's career, and demanding for itself visible incarnation in a discipline, a worship, and a church. I believe, and I assert it in full knowledge of all the supercilious sneers of advanced thinkers and emancipated spiritualists, transcendental or socialistic, that the decay of faith in historical Christianity and the visible Church is at the root of the chief evils of our country and age.⁴⁰

The importance of the Church as a distinctive, divinely appointed institution which must not be dissolved in the world we have gathered from *The Suspense of Faith*. Bellows believes in the Church in the world; not the Church *against* the world, but the Church *and* the world. Both receive positive valuation. The world must resist any threatened tyranny by the Church. Like that most fascinating of modern theologians, the late Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he is acutely aware of 'man's coming of age,' and his thought was continually directed to this very point; a concerned attempt to see what function the Church still had for liberals in a world and humanity which had 'come of age.' His basic religious convictions are not held in any obscurantist way. He insisted that man must have both science and

Christianity, and was aware that a new situation had been created when a large body of Christians took this position: "the union of the Gospel with Liberty" was the distinctive liberal position to which he hoped to give institutional expression in the National Conference. Science *and* Christianity, this is the central Unitarian tradition which he upholds against all attacks, whether from right or left. He describes his co-religionists as

the body of uncreeded Christians, who are profoundly attached to the Gospel, but profoundly weary and incredulous of the great ruling interpretations of the Church of the last fifteen centuries; who believe in Christ and Christianity, but in few of the reasons that have hitherto been given for their claims on belief; who believe in the Church, but not as the enemy of experience, science or freedom; who are resolved to hold on to their Christian faith, while they are equally resolved to know all that is to be known, and see all that is to be seen, and learn all that is to be learned from all other sources of truth and wisdom. ⁴¹

As a convinced Christian, Bellows felt bound to give an interpretation of the mission of Unitarianism *within* Christianity, and this he does in his *Sequel to the Suspense of Faith*. Using the image of the Christian army, he says that Unitarians have deluded themselves by thinking that their particular corps was to lead off and be followed by all the others in a new campaign.

I have believed that the mission of Unitarianism was not the preaching of another Gospel, nor the destruction of any of the vitalizing ideas in the past history of the Church, nor the offering of itself as the exclusive and complete truth . . . but rather the setting up of the lights of a neglected reason, of abused human nature, and of suspected science and experience, along the track of Church history and by the side of the popular theology, that in their new and beautiful illumination, the shadows might depart from the faces and forms of those ancient doctrines, the rust and dust of the long journey cease to be mistaken for original parts of the divine clothing, and specially the coats of mail they had taken on in self-defence, in times of exposure and attack, and now wore, from habit and association, might appear separable and distinct from the truths themselves, and be laid down as burdensome and deforming. ⁴²

Unitarianism has, he claims, a providential mission, a legitimate office within Christendom. It has an errand in "the wilderness of doubt and indifference" into which the disfranchised millions have been driven by the Christian Church's denial of reason and its injustice to humanity, to bring them out of the wilderness back into the Church Universal.

If the great captain sent us out on some such noble service to the general cause, so away from home, that, in the hardships of the campaign we have lost some memory of the old dialect of the city of God, and have betaken ourselves to a way-worn costume — let us not desert our commissioned chief — set up that we are the grand army — forget our brother-soldiers of the Cross, or deny our relations with the whole corps; — and, on the other hand, let us no longer be shot down by our fellows, because our speech is strange to the common ear, and our costume that of exiles and travelers.

We are tributary, not independent; reformers, not originals; shapers of substance, not communicators of it; . . . we must bring what precious truth we have to the mint of the Church Universal, and have it accepted and stamped with the common marks, before it can freely enter into the circulation, and aid the exchequer of Christendom.⁴³

Bellows saw Unitarianism as the cutting edge of Christianity in the nineteenth century; its ideas, he claims, "are the most important, and the only original ideas which this age has contributed to the development of Christ's gospel. They are worth living for and dying for, absolutely indispensable to the progress and the salvation of half the humanity of this century, and to the renovation of the whole Church."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he concludes "they must be blended with the body of doctrine common to the Church Universal" in order to achieve any fullness and completeness.

Bellows' theology was backed by his life. His ecumenical liberal Christian position flowered in his work on behalf of Christian co-operation in America, and his establishment of contacts between American, British and European liberals was a most important contributory factor in the eventual founding of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedoms, which can be seen as another outcome of his ecumenical interests. The founding of no less an organization than the International Red Cross can be traced to his untiring services to the United States Sanitary Commission during and after the Civil War. His ecumenicity was expressed, too, in his passionate support of non-sectarian educational institutions, notably Antioch College, and with President C. W. Eliot at Harvard in 1879 his work helped to revitalize the Divinity School as a truly inter-denominational University faculty of theology. Perhaps his greatest contribution to his denomination and his age was his passionate and effective assertion of the value of institutions. In the religious no less than in the erotic life he realised, in the words of another Churchman, that souls must

descend

To affections, and to faculties
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great prince in prison lies.

He knew that if religious principles were to achieve social relevance there must be institutional body. The Transcendentalists and the Free Religionists left the great prince lying in prison. For the Transcendentalists institutions seemed to be incompatible with intuitions, the Free Religionists with their morbid fear of institutions were never able to create institutional patterns in which an effective group consensus could be achieved, and so never made the impact on society that their ability and intelligence warranted. In time when the Free Religious Association disintegrated they fell back upon the viable institutional patterns that Henry Bellows had created

within the Unitarian community. This is one important reason why the Christian Unitarianism of 1865 became the Free Religion of the Saratoga Conference of 1894, and ironically enough Henry Bellows had made this possible.

Conservative and radical, Henry Bellows' enduring message to Unitarians is that we should take our Christianity seriously, and that we should take our liberalism seriously.

I believe wholly and devoutly in the permanency of Christianity, and in the coexistence of the Church with the civilization which is its child, and is now half ready to be its parricide; and I expect confidently, absolutely, that memory and hope, history and progress, gratitude and longing, institutions and a free spirit, imagination, conscience, reason, affection will all unite again, as they have formerly united, in building up the waste places of Zion, in clothing in beautiful garments the faith and worship of Christendom, now shivering with nakedness, and in bringing back the intellect, aspiration, and artistic genius of the world, now divorced and languishing with home sickness, to the fountain and shelter whence they draw their ancient inspiration, and even the strength that has supported them in exile.⁴⁵

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MINOT JUDSON SAVAGE: REBUILDER OF FAITH *

BY CHARLES WHITE McGEHEE

The Unitarian Church of Jacksonville, Florida

Minot Judson Savage was a product of that Free-Will Baptist movement which paralleled the Unitarian development in northern New England in areas where Unitarianism itself gained little influence. These Baptists were at the heart of the revolt against Calvinism. They were tinged with Arminianism and self-reliance.

When James Lambert Savage, Minot's father, settled at Norridgewock, Maine, he found no Baptist church there and the family attended a Congregational church. Minot was born in 1841, the youngest of four children. Because of ill health his education was intermittent. In 1855, when revivalism was sweeping the land, he underwent a most painful adolescent conversion experience.

Completing high school, Minot taught for a time. Ill health prevented a formal college training. Aided by an anonymous benefactor, he enrolled at Bangor, a Congregational theological school in Maine. He later called it a "theological West Point," where the students were treated not as seekers after truth, but as cadets who would go out and defend certain beliefs against the world.¹

During the summer of 1863 he joined the U. S. Christian Commission and served as an assistant chaplain with the Union army in the skirmishes preliminary to the battle of Chattanooga. He distributed books, aided in conducting services, distributed tracts and was utterly appalled at southern conditions of morality.

In 1864 he was graduated from Bangor, was ordained as a Congregational minister, and married Ella Augusta Dodge, daughter of a Congregational minister. With his new bride he sailed for California, where he served as a missionary at a schoolhouse in San Mateo. Two years later he moved to Grass Valley, where he remained for a year and a half. He loved California, its stirring scenery and its frontier challenge. There his ability in preaching, writing, and lecturing began to attract notice. To this point he considered himself earnest in the old beliefs . . . to such an extent that he regretted having left the scene of the Unitarian heresy in New England.²

* A paper read before the Midwinter Seminar of the Unitarian Historical Society, March 15, 1960, in Boston, Mass.

He wanted to be on the field to combat it. The infirmity of his parents was the deciding factor in his return.

The Seed of Doubt

Back in New England in 1867, he preached at the Park Street and Shawmut churches. At the Framingham Congregational church for the first and last time "he went through the painful process of posing as a candidate."³ He was called, and accepted.

It was in Framingham that he was first exposed to Unitarianism. One of his friends was a former Unitarian minister. They had long conversations together. Minot was still openly antagonistic.⁴ To one incident, however, he was able later to trace a beginning of the larger results that followed:

For the first time, while living in Framingham, I read a tract against future punishment. It was written by Dr. Bellows; and oh, how my heart longed to believe it! How I longed to accept this great hope for all mankind! But I was afraid. I did not dare trust myself to this feeling, lest I should be led astray, and endanger not only my soul, but the souls of others.⁵

He read Darwin and Spencer and began grappling with the problem of a Ptolemaic theology in a Copernican universe.⁶ The two years in Framingham were restless, crucial ones. His inner struggle was accentuated by the outer calm of what he called a beautiful, quiet, rich old village. "There was nothing to be done but carry on the routine clerical work. I wanted to put my hands to the work and build and do something."⁷

William H. Savage, his older brother, had settled in Hannibal, Missouri, as a Congregational minister. It was probably through his influence that Minot went there as pastor of the First Congregational Church. It was during his stay of three and a half years that the real turning-point came.

Here I began to doubt some of the main points of the old theology. As I looked over my church and at those outside of it, I began to question as to what were the fundamental distinctions between those out and those in. So far as I could see, my religious theories did not work practically, as I applied them to men and women. The men outside ought to have been worse, and the men inside ought to have been better. I could not tell wherein consisted the distinction. I knew many a man and woman outside who were unspeakably better than some of the church members. Then I was haunted by the memories of this desire to have some larger and better hope for men. My heart began to revolt against what seemed the cruelty, the injustice, and partiality of the divine government. I began to question whether it could be justice and goodness and love in a God who gave light to only a few of his children, and left the great masses of the world to wander in darkness and to perish.⁸

In this period he also began to question the Bible, which had been the fundamental basis of his old belief. He now wondered if it were as infallible as he thought. "So I began anew the study of the Scriptures, trying to find out their origin, their nature, their authority, what claim they had on the

human heart and conscience.”⁹ Now freely reading the books of the liberals, he was especially impressed by James Freeman Clarke’s *Orthodoxy: Its Truth and Errors*.

He also began a serious study of science. One of the principal charges brought against him when the charges began flying in Hannibal was that there were too many scientific books in his library. “This was supposed in itself to constitute an accusation against the soundness of my faith.”

Change then began, and grew apace; and, as the result of this scientific study, I became a firm believer in the general theory of evolution. While still in the orthodox church, I read a paper on Darwinism, accepting and defending it from first to last. But I had not outgrown the folly of trying to reconcile it with Genesis, — as though any truth were not true, whether or not it agreed with something said thousands of years ago! I soon became known as a man somewhat dangerous and unsound in the faith.¹⁰

His open defense of Darwinism not only endangered his position in the denomination and in his own pulpit; inwardly he was battling to reconcile his new liberal views with the pastorate of a Congregational church.

The pain sometimes came to be almost unbearable. There were long and weary months when I believe I would have been glad to lie down and fall into an unwaking sleep, only to escape this terrible struggle. One thing, however, I can say. During that long time, I did not preach anything which I did not believe, though it was perpetually charged against me that I did not preach a great many things which I ought to believe, which I ought to have preached. It was the omissions that were the principal charges brought against me during those months and years.¹¹

A strong influence in those days in Missouri was Minot’s brother, William, who also later became a Unitarian, serving for a number of years at the church in Watertown. In the preface to *Christianity, the Science of Manhood*, Minot states that William should be given half the credit because he helped him to think it through.

In this book Minot writes that he has found it impossible to rest in tradition and that he has felt compelled to seek a reasonable basis on which to stand. The preface to the original edition is dated February, 1873. The note affixed to the second edition states that the main purpose of the book is:

... to assume nothing that the most ultra unbeliever would care to question, and on that basis, to build up a valid argument for the practical acceptance of a living Christianity.¹²

Obviously, contends Savage, man is a physical being, an animal, possessed of a body that is good. But he is also an intellectual being, and as such a being his end is truth. Man’s affectional nature links him in community of interest with others and makes him a social being. Finally, man, wherever he is, has always possessed the power and presence of a religious being above him to which he owes allegiance.

True religion and true manhood are identical. And here begins his lifelong grappling with the problem of the personal God and Darwinism. Men must think of God as having in mind an ideal of the not-yet-created man, and this ideal must include all that he can ever become.

The perfect manhood includes his right relations to his creator and his fellows. "The carpenter theory of the universe is giving way to the growth theory. Things evolve from within, in accordance with implanted seed-forms and plans, instead of being built and shaped from without."¹³

Jesus condensed Christianity into a phrase, "Love to God and Man." Minot says that he that loves is born of God, but he that loves not is not a Christian. There is no namable evil that the law of Christian love does not forbid or would not destroy. This is the point that Savage belabors. He insists that the truths of Spencer, Darwin, Spinoza, Plato and Confucius are all Christian truths.

If Christianity be the all-inclusive science of manhood, in all its departments, then whatever is essential to the growth of manhood — i. e., all truth, is a part of it. If this be not true, then Christianity did not come from God.¹⁴

Christianity is not built on the annihilation of other religions. It includes them all, harmonizes and arranges. Here he draws from Spencer's theory that all knowledge is classification. Without Christianity, "Genesis and Geology" may fight it out to suit themselves. It gives the skeptic all he asks and beats him.¹⁵

With this stalwart defense of Christianity, why, then, was the book so strongly criticized? The principal reason was his premise that the evidences of Christianity are inadequate. Profiting no doubt from the higher criticism of the Germans, he points out that the canon of the Bible has never been definitely settled. Authorship, editing, the foibles of the bookbinders are all introduced as evidence that no divine providence has protected what is alleged to be its word. Nowhere does the Bible claim infallibility.

As to the validity of the prophecy, he contends that there is virtually no agreement among Christian scholars as to what it is; there are varying theories even in the Bible itself.

Turning to the miracles, he says that Jesus nowhere offers them as evidence of his teachings, nor do the Apostles make such use of them. The miracles instead of being a support to Christianity are a burden and hindrance. No miracle ever substantiated a moral truth.

In order that the argument from miracles or prophecy should be of any worth, you must assume an infallible inspiration. And in order that the infallibility of inspiration should be substantiated, you must assume an infallible transmission of records, and the authenticity of much which can never be proved.¹⁶

What is heresy ? "Any teaching that hinders the making of manhood." ¹⁷ If the church is not to lose her power and fall behind the age, she must address herself to the making over into God's image of men.

The Church has many rival organizations and agencies in this work. Many are the theories and methods that are on trial. Science, Philosophy, Philanthropy, Societies, Books, Newspapers, Lectures — all these, as well as churches and preachers, are in the field. ¹⁸

In his first book he was obviously making a valiant stand for defense of orthodoxy — but the dam was about to break. Except for minor rationalizations, his thought was consistently to follow these lines. In *The Religion of Evolution*, which was written three years later, he was yet to contend that Christianity was the highest stage of man's spiritual development. But instead of structuring an umbrella large enough to hold all views, he said rather that he was a Christian because he was an evolutionist. Christianity was by no means perfect — but just as man was the furthest point of animal existence, so Christianity was the highest pinnacle of spiritual striving.

Although it aroused strong criticism in his own denomination, Savage's first book received good reviews throughout the nation in the orthodox publications. It was a source of great amusement to him when the book was republished in 1880, after he was an established Unitarian, that many of the same publications which praised the book from the point of view of Congregationalism, severely criticized it — although there were no changes whatsoever. ¹⁹ It was now a dangerous book.

The Break Is Made

Now perfectly conscious that he was no longer orthodox, Minot Savage wondered if there were a church where he could honestly feel he belonged, and where he could freely speak his word. He was on good terms with his congregation in Hannibal. The greatest criticism came from the larger denomination. Only two or three members of his own parish openly opposed him. The remainder were loyal to the last.

Simultaneous calls were received from Congregational churches in Indianapolis and Springfield. Rejecting both, he accepted an invitation to preach in the Third Unitarian Church in Chicago.

Up to this time, I had never stood in a Unitarian pulpit. The first Sunday I did so stand, I stood in my own, preaching my first free sermon in my own free pulpit. When they asked me to become their minister, I told them frankly I did not know whether I was a Unitarian or not, and I did not care much, but I did know I could not stay longer where I had been. If they were willing to give me an opportunity to study and think freely and to preach what I earnestly believed, whether it might be labelled by one title or another, then I would

accept. On those terms, they did accept me; and I began my work as a Unitarian.²⁰

Following announcement that he had become a Unitarian, Savage was called on by two doctors of divinity in Chicago, who, after a long and free conversation, said, "You ought to have stayed in, and helped us fight it out on the inside."²¹

He could not see it in this fashion:

It seemed to me very much like a member of the Democratic party secretly working in favor of the Republicans, or like a soldier wearing the uniform of one army and secretly opposing those with whom he professed to be in sympathy.²²

Because of his denominational change, he was ostracized by most of his friends of the old faith. *Christianity, the Science of Manhood* was removed from Congregational libraries.²³

In those early Chicago years he was befriended by Robert Collyer, the rugged English blacksmith who became a lay Methodist preacher and came to America in 1849. Influenced by Lucretia Mott, Collyer became an ardent abolitionist. A storm arose when the latter preached at the Unitarian church in Philadelphia on invitation of Dr. Furness. Called to trial by the Methodists, he submitted his resignation. Shortly thereafter he came to the Unitarian church in Chicago, was active in the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War and was a popular lyceum speaker.

Savage's Chicago pastorate came just before the eruption of "the issue in the west." Jenkin Lloyd Jones was not yet in Chicago. Elected secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference in 1875, Jones was to make a vigorous stand for a broader-based Unitarianism, possessed of an emphasis on intellectual freedom, fellowship, and appreciation of the truths of all great religions. Opposing him were such men as Jasper Douthit, who contended that the Theodore Parker brand of Unitarianism allowed too much freedom of belief, substituting ethics for religion, opening its doors to those who were not essentially Christian.

In this period of conflict, not only were the Unitarians struggling to resolve their position — the founding of the Free Religious Association in 1867 was over basically the same differences as the issue in the west — but orthodoxy was beginning to react against the gains of liberalism. It was an age of honest doubt, bred in an atmosphere of religious freedom never before witnessed by any society. Findings of biblical scholarship gave cause for resistance to prophetic attitudes. In some fashion Genesis and geology were seeking a more cordial acquaintance. There was religion in the poetry of Tennyson, Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson, Holmes and Whitman — but it was not necessarily a Christian religion.

The defection of such men as Savage and Collyer from orthodoxy was part of a pattern of official expulsions and voluntary withdrawals from orthodoxy. Charles H. Lyttle describes this general era as follows:

In two decades agnosticism, Ingersollism, materialistic Free Thought, the Free Religious Association, the Ethical Culture movement had gained such a degree of popular attention and prestige that the conservatives became seriously alarmed. Moreover, economic 'anarchy' — for such seemed to be the railroad strikes, the Haymarket riot, Socialist and Single-Tax theories — and the cultural 'anarchy' of 'realistic' fiction, Whitman's poetry, the French Impressionists, and Women's Suffrage 'bloomers' appeared to be confederates of religious 'anarchy' in a dangerous conspiracy against Christ's church and good morals. Orthodoxy met these 'anarchist' trends with an authoritarian reaction. Strict doctrinal conformity was required of ministers and members; liberalism was denounced as the source of all evils; heresy trials were resumed.²⁴

Savage's first Unitarian pastorate was a short one.

I had been in Chicago but a year when I came to Boston to attend the May conference of the American Unitarian Association and then for the first time preached in the Unity pulpit as a special one Sunday. The society had no pastor, but I had no idea of being a candidate. But I had no sooner reached Chicago than I received a call by telegraph, which I accepted and came to Boston in September of that year, 1874. I did not leave Chicago because I did not like the place or my position there, but because I had my father and mother to take care of.²⁵

The Long Ministry at Unity

At thirty-three, then, Minot Savage came to Boston, a city slow to recognize its prophets, but possessed of "gentleness and indulgence in religious matters."²⁶ In his ministry of twenty-two years at the Church of the Unity, he saw the gentle indulgence turn to open fervor. Standing room at his services was usually at a premium.

His sermons were printed weekly in the *Unity* publication, which attained world-wide circulation. For a time they were printed in the *London Times*. Volume after volume of his collected sermons were published by the firm of George H. Ellis, who was publisher of the *Christian Register* and a member of the Unity church. Savage became a popular lecturer, frequently travelling throughout the nation.

He was of medium height with a straight and well-made figure. One Boston newspaper stated that in and out of the pulpit he wore an expression of "mild expostulation." During his later ministry he wore a heavy beard, lustrous and brown, which accentuated a pointed mustache. He was a handsome man, but his eyes were small and neither piercing or very expressive. Often he wore glasses. His pulpit uniform was a Prince Albert coat and white necktie.²⁷

As a preacher Savage was often ranked with Channing, Parker and James Freeman Clarke. One writer says he compared favorably with Parker, but that he lacked a certain sweetness of expression. Another article of the time called him a more polished speaker than either Edward Everett Hale or Phillips Brooks, moderate in manner and speech, never stumbling or repeating himself.

His voice was strong and used to good effect. The tendency was to nasal tones, soft but usually deep, clear and seldom unpleasant. He preached without notes. After reading the text from the lectern, he wandered about the platform. Later, he could dictate the entire sermon to a stenographer, verbatim.

He admitted a nervousness before entering the pulpit — he once said he sometimes hoped he would become ill or break a leg in order to be spared the ordeal of preaching.

Edward A. Horton once wrote

Here is a man who wheels his pulpit off to the club and the dinner. He has been able to utter truth so that those far away on the edge of religion have hailed his word as light.²⁸

George H. Hepworth, a conservative who eventually renounced Unitarianism, had been Savage's predecessor at Unity Church. Interest had dropped and the church was in debt.²⁹ Within two months after Savage's arrival, the church was filled regularly. It was soon out of debt. His Darwinism was now an open issue, and his preaching was called "extremely radical."³⁰

This was an era of the move westward to the suburbs. The church was on West Newton Street. Powerful churches in this area were suffering visibly. Savage held his congregation long after the locality had ceased to be fashionable. His people came from as far away as Dorchester, Quincy, Cambridge, and Somerville. He once said that his parish was twenty miles across.

However, the problem of urban removal had some bearing on his move to New York. He had refused a call to the Church of the Messiah in 1874. Robert Collyer accepted the pastorate in 1879. By 1895 Collyer, now quite old, began negotiating with Savage to become his assistant. At about this time, Savage declined a call to All Souls in Washington.³¹

Upon his resignation in January 1895, one Boston newspaper stated that he was leaving because he had been unable to persuade the parish to build a church in a more favorable location.³² This was denied, although Savage had proposed the building. The pressure was mounting from New York. He hesitated in Boston only because of insistence of Boston friends. But

once the decision was made he was adamant, saying he could not put himself up for auction between Boston and New York. Unitarianism was strong in Boston, he said, and New York needed his efforts.

The issue was much debated in the newspapers. His people made every effort to keep him in Boston. At the Channing Club on January 28, Edward Horton said:

He has put a tongue in the dumb mouth of agnosticism. New York needs Mr. Savage more than it needs Mayor Strong and Commissioner Roosevelt, and he will get a grip on New York, its convictions and its truths . . . ³³

Unity, the liberal voice of the Western Conference, editorialized with prophetic vision:

The decision is fraught with important consequences to the Unitarian denomination, whose valiant champion he is, and perhaps the most representative mouth-piece of Unitarianism at the present date. The headquarters of Unitarianism loses a man who might become within the next ten years more of a leader than he has been in the past, but the cause of liberal religion, untrammelled by name and unharnessed to the traditions of any sect, will probably gain more than Unitarianism will lose, if, indeed, the latter loses anything. It is the hope of Mr. Savage that in going to New York he may do more for his denomination, and if there is any constituency in New York of the denominational kind, Mr. Savage will do much to develop it. But the truth may be that New York is waiting for and needing now a Unitarian propaganda on still higher and more conclusive lines that will be superior to the controversies of Christendom, and will seek the synthesis on the lines of humanity, which will welcome Jew, agnostic, progressive, trinitarianism, open-minded Catholic and Ethical Culture advocates, into one conscious fellowship, seeking more and more cooperation on lines of human helpfulness, practical religion, seven-day working for seven-day piety . . . he will indeed be a prophet to a needy city. ³⁴

In the *Boston Home Journal*, Horton wrote that Savage was equipped for the task, contending that

he has carried forward the work of Channing and Parker and helped lay the foundation of the coming church universal. Changes of a marvelous kind have come over many creeds and sects. It may yet be seen in the fulness of time, that Mr. Savage has contributed to an inner unity, which the 20th Century will more fully understand and enjoy. ³⁵

Only a study of Community Church in New York and the impact of the ministry of Savage on the careers of John Haynes Holmes and Donald Harrington would cast any light on these developments. At his death, the *Boston Transcript* played down his social action influence, editorializing:

Mr. Savage's popular radicalism, so abhorrent to the conservatism of that day, was confined to religion. One has only to compare his views on social, industrial and labor questions to those of his own successor, John Haynes Holmes . . . to see how completely out of touch he was with the socialistic trend of the past twenty-five years. ³⁶

If his preaching and activity in New York were confined to religion, it was a dominant religion, which paved the way for the ground cultivated by Holmes and Harrington. Although the sermons of Savage were seldom social action sermons, they certainly tended to move the *individual* to consideration of these things.

He was Collyer's associate minister. At first they shared the pulpit. Then Savage rapidly assumed the greater burden. The church was crowded on Sundays. The *Messiah Pulpit* took over the wide circulation of *Unity Pulpit* and the sermons were periodically collected and published in book form. His reputation grew. He travelled extensively in this country and made jaunts to Europe virtually every year. In June 1896, along with Booker T. Washington, he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard. President Eliot called him a truth seeker, "proving all things, holding fast to that which is good; orator vehement, persuasive, eloquent."³⁷

The Church of the Unity in Boston dissolved after his departure. The property was assumed by the Benevolent Fraternity. Horton commented that only Savage could have held such an audience under such circumstances. The rallying around the genius of one man was the easiest way to build a church, but it was too often built on sand. Parker filled the Music Hall for years, but there could be no successor.³⁸

The Unitarianism of Minot Savage

No lukewarm Unitarian, Minot Savage was to maintain a constant pride in his denomination. He called it the real "Evangelical Church";³⁹ and the "greatest revolution in religion and theology since the birth of Christianity."⁴⁰

Already a member of the board of directors of the American Unitarian Association, he was in 1891 appointed chairman of a committee on the revision of the preamble and constitution of the National Conference. The draft of the report was published in the *Christian Register* in the spring of 1894, and was attacked by Brown of King's Chapel, Sunderland, and Douthit on the basis that the Christian name and all theistic phrases had been dropped.⁴¹ Another draft was prepared for the National Conference meeting at Saratoga in October, 1894.

This was the culmination of the troublesome issue in the west. But things had changed since the Chicago days. That which Jones had called the "theological scare" had dissipated somewhat. Ingersollism, secularism, ethical culture, as well as evolution, biblical criticism, and the study of ethnic religions, had now become accepted and respectable.

During the Saratoga conference, there was tension and debate over the wording of the resolution. Finally there was unanimity. The assembly sang the doxology with streaming eyes. Unitarianism in America had ended fifty years of theological dispute.⁴² Minot Savage was given credit for having maneuvered and conciliated the statement of purpose which reflected the doctrine he had been preaching for years, and which was to remain in use to the present time in the statement of purposes of the proposed consolidation of the Unitarian and Universalist churches of America in 1959:

These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

The following year 1895, in Washington, Savage was elected chairman of the National Conference. Following his election he issued a report to the churches.

The influence of the new declaration, adopted last year at Saratoga, has been felt in a most gratifying way. Many hearts were made happy at the sight of a united body of believers and workers, in which the spirit of cordial fellowship was supreme. The right wing and the left wing, apparently forgetting that they are on opposite sides of the body, remembered only that it was their office to sustain that body in its flight . . . It offered to the world its own basis of love to God and love to man, as a satisfactory formula for religious union.⁴³

Later, as a representative of his denomination, he went to Geneva to the meeting of the International Council of Unitarians and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers, preaching the conference sermon from the pulpit which John Calvin had used to condemn Michael Servetus three hundred years before.

What was the basis of the Unitarianism of Savage? At the peak of his ministry in New York, he outlined these characteristics of Unitarianism:

First, freedom of the individual to think, not for the sake of liberty itself, but for the purpose of finding truth. Second, God that is wisdom, power and love — which is at the heart of the universe. Third, that God is not only these things, but the universal Father, not of any elect, any Christian body, but the tender, loving Father of all men. Fourth, that the Father of all men would desire them to find truth. Thus, revelation — not confined to any one book or epoch of history. All truth coming into the world from any source is a revelation from the Father of all men. Truth should be taken for authority and not authority for truth. Fifth, Incarnation — not in the complete incarnation of God in any one man, country, or age, but in a progressive incarnation. All that is good, true and beautiful is of God. Sixth, salvation by character. Character is no condition of salvation, it *is* salvation. Seventh, universal hope. Because of his very nature, God is obligated to reveal to all of his creatures that the gift of life is a blessing and not a curse. Eighth, retribution. Universal, quick, unescapable. Through this, which is mercy, we arrive at salvation.⁴⁴

What are the guides for this kind of Unitarianism?

All the light of the saints, prophets, religious teachers of the world; all the light of all the Bibles of the world; all the discoverers, inventors, truth-seekers, scientific investigators of all nations and all times. All the experience of humanity. The ideal is the face of God, looking at us through the dim mists of the future. All progress in science, art, economy is under the impulse of this ideal.⁴⁵

It may be said that Unitarian theology has advanced very few steps since the time of Minot Judson Savage.

The Thought of Savage

It has been said that in the post-Civil War period Darwin and Spencer, between them, exercised such sovereignty over America as George III never enjoyed, with Fiske as their vice regent.⁴⁶ Thus it is not unusual that these three men should have been the predominant factors in the shaping of Minot Savage's thought.

His Darwinism was received by deflection from Spencer. He made Spencer his very own, giving Spencer's thought a base of naturalistic theism (which in his agnosticism Spencer would never have done); but Spencer did not seem to mind. In 1883 he wrote Savage:

I have read with interest your clearly reasoned and eloquent exposition of the religious and ethical bearings of the evolution doctrine. I rejoice to see that these aspects of it are coming to the front. It is high time that something should be done toward making people see that there remains for them not a mere negation of their previous ethical and religious beliefs, as they had supposed, but contrariwise, beliefs which, as you say, have a definite and unshakable foundation . . .⁴⁷

Spencer had been in America in 1882 and there is a possibility they met. Also, on one of Savage's frequent visits to Europe, they could easily have had conversations. Savage frequently mailed volumes of his sermons to people in high places. This could have begun their relationship.

The most consistently clear influence on Savage was that of John Fiske. Certain passages of Fiske could well have been written by Savage. This is especially true in such lines as these from *The Destiny of Man*:

As with the Copernican astronomy, so with the Darwinian biology, we rise to a higher view of the workings of God and of the nature of Man than was ever attainable before. So far from degrading Humanity, or putting it on a level with the animal world in general, the Darwinian theory shows us distinctly for the first time how the creation and the perfecting of Man is the goal toward which Nature's work has all the while been tending. It enlarges tenfold the significance of human life, places it upon even a loftier eminence than poets or prophets have imagined, and makes it seem more than ever the chief object of that creative activity which is manifested in the physical universe.⁴⁸

From Fiske he received justification for his views on immortality. "He did in the pulpit very much the same work John Fiske did in writing such

books as *The Idea of God*.”⁴⁹ Both Fiske and Spencer are freely quoted throughout his sermons.

Other influences are less easily traced. The higher criticism of the Germans certainly made its mark on his theological development. Although Emerson seems not to have made too much of a direct mark, one senses a vast impact of oriental thought which could have worked through in this fashion.

There is a rather definite influence of Theodore Parker on his theological thought. Savage frequently mentions that which is transient in religious values. He states that the Golden Rule was just as golden when it was spoken by Confucius long before Jesus.⁵⁰

Although Savage gradually modified his defense of Christianity and spread his base to more universal terminology, there was little fundamental change in his thought after the publication of *The Religion of Evolution* in 1876.

The following is an outline of his thought:

Religion: The relationship, as to right or wrong, in which man stands to his God and to his fellow-man.⁵¹ Through it we do what we can to establish better relations between humanity and this infinite power that works in and through the universe.⁵² It includes art, literature, music, science, government and sociology.⁵³

Worship: Analyzed deeply, expressed by the word “admiration.”⁵⁴

God: “If he be not in the dust of our streets, the bricks of our houses, the beat of our hearts, then he is nowhere.”⁵⁵ We must either believe in nature and cease believing in God, or else we must believe in a God who is in and through nature, its life, its soul. We can no longer believe in a God who rules the world from without or interferes arbitrarily with natural processes.⁵⁶ “He is not less than personal, but infinitely more. Personality, in man, is one of his minor manifestations.”⁵⁷

Man: The crowning blossom on the topmost bough, just winning his crown and grasping his sceptre. With accumulated wealth and knowledge he will be free to go up and live in the affections, the mind and the spirit.⁵⁸

Prayer: Does not change any single law or force; it only sets us in new relations to them.⁵⁹

Good and Evil: Evil is maladjustment. Man universally desires that which is good. Obedience to divine laws must always be to his good. God then is not the author of evil.⁶⁰ Man creates his own heaven or hell.⁶¹ Heaven can only exist in relation to our capacity to apprehend it. One cannot “break into a Wagner’s opera with a pickaxe.”⁶²

Atonement: Must be something capable of taking a living human being, in its entirety, and bringing it, body and soul, into sympathy with the life of God right here, now; not tomorrow, not in another world. ⁶³

Revelation: Every soul, being made in the image of God, and so capable of communion with him, is open to the divine influx. The Word of God is not bound by the bookbinder. ⁶⁴ One has faith not in churches, nor councils, nor books, but in God. Wherever truth, beauty or righteousness are found, there is God. ⁶⁵

Jesus: Any living individual can become as divine as Jesus or as any of the grand souls of history. ⁶⁶ His teachings are not original. But the power of his ideal is one of humanity's greatest forces. ⁶⁷ Let science give to this force verification. ⁶⁸

Salvation: "Never will I seek or receive private, individual salvation; never will I enter into final peace alone; but forever and ever and everywhere I will live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature throughout all the worlds" (Buddhist scripture). ⁶⁹

Christianity: It is "the highest outcome of religious evolution, just as man is the highest outcome of animal life. ⁷⁰ It teaches that the one, all-important thing is life. The forms live for it and not it for the forms. ⁷¹

Immortality: Some day it will be discovered by science. If immortality be a fact at all that touches or concerns us in any way, it may come within the range of human experience. ⁷²

Views on Spiritualism

From the table-tapping days in Norridgewock, Savage was to continue a preoccupation with spiritualism. As a young minister in California he felt he had demolished the matter to his satisfaction. But in 1874, soon after his arrival in Boston, one of his parishioners who had lost her father visited a spiritualist who brought forth some interesting revelations. She wanted to know whether to pursue the matter further. Savage was embarrassed to have no advice for her. He determined to develop an opinion on the subject that was "worth something." ⁷³

By 1887 his sermons were strongly influenced. On Easter of that year he endorsed Mesmerism. Examining psychic phenomena, he drew Biblical parallels, stating that many of them were visions, voices, messages from "across the border." ⁷⁴ He did not believe that Jesus actually reappeared after his death, but that the disciples did see and talk with him:

I believe that Jesus was seen. I believe that this magnificent fact is that which inspired the early church and gave us our Easter morn . . . I believe I am

to go through that process that they call death no more troubled or changed than I am by the fact that I went through the sleep of last night and waked up this morning. ⁷⁵

In 1889 he was structuring the subject more thoroughly in his sermons. In a series of sermons he analyzed Christian Science, hypnotism, auto-suggestion, and shock healings. These things indicate that the mind of the person himself is chiefly concerned, he said, and that it only needs, no matter what the influence may be, some power to give the person confidence, some power to rouse the life force. He believed that such confidence in the mind would bring about a tremendous reaction against the old materialism. Moving into a structured thought on the subject, he called it a "Higher Spiritualism," a complete system of thought, of life, of ethics, of belief concerning God and man. Its grand belief was simply that death is not the end, but merely an incident in the onward and upward progress of the individual life. ⁷⁶

He felt that Higher Spiritualism was in perfect accord with all the best scientific and philosophical teaching and with the highest of moral principles. It would throw new light on the Bible, which "is nothing but a spiritualistic book." ⁷⁷ One could easily see then the visit of Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus, for instance.

Life presents two theories, one of which must certainly be true. The first theory is materialistic. Any human life is merely a passing, transitory stage.

Humanity itself, its brain, its heart, its life, its hope, its Jesus, its Shakspeare, its Buddha, all the great names of the world, are only curious and strange manifestations of this material world, blossoming as the plants blossom, fading as the plants fade. ⁷⁸

What is the other theory? It is that spirit and life are supreme. Spirit shapes and controls form; form only expresses spirit. One has a dozen bodies in the course of this life. We must choose between these two — materialism or spiritualism. ⁷⁹

He admits he is puzzled by a communication between himself and a friend in another state. But he also cannot explain the telegraph and the telephone. Here he rests. He is in no hurry. If he comes to accept the central theme of spiritualism, it will not change his other basic beliefs. Rather, it would substantiate them.

It would abolish death. It would make you know that the loved are not lost, though they have gone before you. It would make any human life here, whatever its poverty, disease or sorrow, worth while, because of the grand possibility of the outlook. ⁸⁰

These words of hope were a strange prelude to the death in 1899 of his son, Philip Henry Savage, at the age of 33. Savage was almost fantas-

tically devoted to his son, who at the time of his death was executive clerk at the Boston Public Library. He had attended Harvard Divinity School, but had withdrawn after a year. Later he returned to Harvard as an instructor and did a paper on Whitman and Thoreau. A promising poet, he had published *First Poems and Fragments* (1895) and *Poems* (1900). His poems frequently appeared in *Harper's*. His death was sudden. He was engaged to be married at the time.

Crushed, Savage buried himself in deeper aspects of spiritualism. His book, *Life beyond Death*, a series of sermons on the subject of immortality, is dedicated to his son in the most tender and intimate language.

Shortly after the death of Philip Henry, his father was to report a contact. He was having a sitting with a Mrs. Piper. Philip claimed to be present, saying to his father, "I want you to go at once to my room. Look in a drawer and you will find there a lot of loose papers, among which are some papers I wish you would destroy at once." Mrs. Piper, who was in a trance, had not known young Savage. Minot went to the room on Joy Street, found the notes his son had jotted down which were not for the world to know, and destroyed them.⁸¹

In his twenty-five years of interest in spiritualism, Savage admitted he had found much fraud. Despite this, he was confident clairvoyance and clairaudience did exist. As for the many instances of spiritual manifestations he felt he had witnessed, he wrote:

If so much as a hair or a grain of sand be moved, though it be only a fraction of an inch, by any power which is not 'physical', in the scientific sense, then it seems to me that we have crossed the Rubicon that separates our ordinary life from what is called the 'spiritual.'⁸²

Yet, he did not classify himself as a spiritualist. It was not because he was afraid of the name, or the stigma of association, but rather that the word carried with it many methods which he could not condone. But he was confident there was a great truth at the heart of the spiritualistic movement.⁸³

Final Years

At no time during his ministry was Minot Savage possessed of good health. He was forced to take a rest between his resignation from the Church of the Unity and his duties in New York. The death of his son heightened a tension which obviously aggravated the vertigo which had plagued him.

On May 22, 1906, the New York *Herald Tribune* reported:

Because of a complete breakdown of his health, the Rev. Dr. Minot J. Savage has sent his resignation as pastor of the Church of the Messiah, the foremost Unitarian church in New York.

Physicians had ordered an uninterrupted rest for three years. Dr. Collyer assumed the Messiah pulpit until 1909, when John Haynes Holmes, who once called himself "one of Minot Savage's boys," came to the post.

For a time he was in a private sanitarium. Most of his last years were spent with his daughter and son-in-law, the Rev. Minot Simons in Cleveland, Ohio, and with his son, Maxwell Savage, Unitarian minister at Worcester, Massachusetts, and his wife.

These years were spent, according to his son Maxwell, with "both physical and mental infirmity increasing upon him."⁸⁴ In 1918, however, he was residing at the Lotos Club in New York. He came to Boston for the May meetings and was also anticipating marriage with Miss Katherine Jones of Brockton.⁸⁵ Mrs. Savage had died on September 9, 1916 at the age of 72, while spending the summer at Prout's Neck, Maine, with her husband.

He was found dead in his room at the Parker House by his son Maxwell on May 22, 1918. The funeral services were conducted by Charles E. Park. Among the ushers were Palfrey Perkins and John Haynes Holmes. The ashes were placed in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

At the time of his death, Boston scarcely remembered him, according to the *Springfield Republican*:

For his own public has long since been dispersed or had passed away. The popular preacher — the best of the kind — often has very much the same fate in the public mind as the popular actor; he instructs, he even inspires; but when he is gone, how soon is he forgotten.⁸⁶

Evaluation

Somewhere between the sharp shadings of the theologian and the more routine concerns of the parish minister may be found the basis for an appraisal of Minot Judson Savage. Pushing his pulpit before him, to the lecture platform, to the banquet table, to the spiritualist's seance — he sermonized wherever he went, striving to bring the major concerns of science and theology to the level of those who needed them most.

"To many he seemed a destroyer of the faith," editorialized the *Christian Register*. "But his purposes were all constructive, and there can be no question whatever that he did help to rebuild the faith of many thousands of minds."⁸⁷

He was no scholar in the pure sense of the word. Sensitive and emotional, he was yet full of truth and power, filled with enthusiasm and ethical intensity. Constantly handicapped by a frail physical structure, he was carried along by a magnetic religious zeal, a pride in his denomination, at a time when many of his colleagues felt denominational pride was provincial.

He was of inestimable value to Unitarianism, both in terms of his powerful preaching and in his organizational leadership. It is too early to consider whether or not he was an adequate successor to Channing and Parker.

Basically, he was a preacher, not a writer. He was more concerned about the man of his day than about his own imprint on posterity. His thought was not original, but it was creatively adaptive in terms of bringing mighty issues into focus in the daily lives of men. Freed from orthodoxy, he wanted to liberate all humanity.

No social reformer, it seemed rather that he wanted to stimulate his hearers to reform. He was aware of the great social, industrial, spiritual and intellectual rumblings that were in the air. It was as if he wanted to grasp their significance and give meaning to them by giving meaning to the life of the individual human being.

NOTES

1. Minot Judson Savage, *My Creed* (Boston, 1890), pp. 18-19.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
3. *New York Times*, January 12, 1896.
4. *My Creed*, p. 20.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Maxwell Savage, "Minot Judson Savage," *Heralds of a Liberal Faith*, Ed. S. A. Eliot (Boston, 1952), IV, 209.
7. *New York Times*, January 12, 1896.
8. *My Creed*, pp. 20-21.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
12. Minot Judson Savage, *Christianity: the Science of Manhood* (Boston, 1880), p. vi.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

19. *My Creed*, p. 23.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
23. *Boston Traveller*, January 25, 1896.
24. Charles H. Lyttle, *Freedom Moves West* (Boston, 1952), pp. 174-175.
25. *New York Times*, January 12, 1896.
26. Duncan McDermid, "Noted American Preacher" *Arena*, XVIII (1897), pp. 233-234.
27. *Boston News*, February 27, 1893.
28. *Boston Journal*, January 28, 1896.
29. *New York Times*, January 12, 1896.
30. *Christian Register*, May 30, 1918.
31. *Boston Record*, December 24, 1895.
32. *Boston Gazette*, December 29, 1895.
33. *Boston Globe*, January 28, 1896.
34. *Unity*, January 23, 1896.
35. *Boston Home Journal*, January 28, 1896.
36. *Boston Transcript*, May 25, 1918.
37. *New Unity*, July 23, 1896.
38. *Springfield Republican*, October 3, 1896.
39. Minot Judson Savage, *Our Unitarian Gospel* (Boston, 1898), p. 282.
40. *Heralds of a Liberal Faith*, p. 208.
41. *Freedom Moves West*, p. 212.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 212, 213.
43. *Christian Register*, December 5, 1895.
44. *Our Unitarian Gospel*, pp. 13, 14.
45. *My Creed*, pp. 41-42.
46. Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind* (New Haven, 1950), p. 87.
47. *Heralds of a Liberal Faith*, p. 207.
48. John Fiske, *The Destiny of Man* (Boston, 1884), p. 24.
49. *Boston Transcript*, May 25, 1918.
50. *Our Unitarian Gospel*, p. 31.
51. Minot Judson Savage, *The Religion of Evolution* (Boston, 1897), p. 27.
52. *My Creed*, p. 51.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

54. Minot Judson Savage, *Pillars of the Temple* (Boston, 1904), p. 186.
55. *Religion of Evolution*, p. 66.
56. *My Creed*, p. 61.
57. *Religion of Evolution*, p. 70.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 90, 91.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 108-110.
61. *Pillars of the Temple*, p. 85.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
63. *Religion of Evolution*, p. 209.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-193.
65. *Pillars of the Temple*, p. 136.
66. *Religion of Evolution*, p. 212.
67. Minot Judson Savage, *Religious Reconstruction* (Boston, 1888), pp. 132-133.
68. Minot Judson Savage, *Talks about Jesus* (Boston, 1880), p. 161.
69. *Pillars of the Temple*, p. 74.
70. *Religion of Evolution*, p. 229.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
72. *My Creed*, p. 179.
73. Minot Judson Savage, *Life beyond Death* (New York, 1900), p. 297.
74. *New York Journal*, April 19, 1897.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Minot Judson Savage, *Signs of the Times* (Boston, 1889), p. 146.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 157.
81. *Ainslee's Magazine*, 1901. (Clipping on file at the Unitarian Historical Library, Boston).
82. *Life beyond Death*, p. 299.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
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THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL PARKER*

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It is now one hundred years since Theodore Parker died in Florence, Italy. Until this time it was conceivable that someone lived who had known Theodore Parker personally, but now it is safe to assume that no one remains who can speak of the Parker they remember. Where personal acquaintance ends, history begins. And so this year marks more than the observance of Parker's memorial: henceforth our knowledge of the prophet of Unitarianism must be based upon the quest of the historical Parker.

The title of this address, with its obvious parallel to one of the classics of church history, means to imply no presumption on my part. I presume neither to compare myself with the author of that work nor Parker with its subject. Indeed, as Schweitzer has remarked, "The problem of the life of Jesus has no analogue in the field of history."¹

And yet there are certain difficulties involved in the search for *any* historical personality which Schweitzer has encountered in his study of Jesus and which we would do well to recognize in our quest of the historical Parker. Schweitzer's central observation is that, "It was not only each epoch that found its reflection in Jesus, each individual created Him in accordance with his own character."²

Doubtless my presentation this afternoon will be conditioned by my own character and personality, but this I have tried to minimize by using *verbatim* descriptions by Parker's contemporaries, and these I have done my best to select with your interests foremost in mind. I should add parenthetically that some of these reminiscences and stories have tended to take on a legendary quality, and we must be ever on our guard to distinguish the man from the myth.

There are a number of approaches we could make to the historical Parker. We could concentrate on his outward life and actions, but these have been covered by the early biographers and are sufficiently rehearsed elsewhere. We could know Theodore Parker from his historical context, but this I feel is the chief contribution of Commager's work. Moreover, it seems

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to me that the real man has gotten lost in these approaches. We have been content with an image, with a posed and sometimes re-touched picture.

Instead of considering the historical Parker from the viewpoint of his public life or the impersonal context of his times, I propose that this afternoon we turn our attention to Parker's private life and the personal side of a few of his activities in order to give us an insight into his very self-consciousness as a man.

We know less about the childhood of Theodore Parker than any other period of his life and are consequently prone to dismiss it with a few standard anecdotes. For information on Parker's youth we have been limited to his "Autobiographical Fragment," which was written in Rome and concludes abruptly at the age of eight.³ To this basic record I will add two sketches of Parker's early life, both in manuscript form in the Unitarian Association collection. They are "Anecdotes of the Late Theodore Parker," written by his nephew, Columbus Green, and a "Sketch of Theodore Parker's Life" written by George Ripley.⁴

Born in Lexington on August 24, 1810, he was by five years the youngest of eleven children. His father was over 50 and his mother was 47 when little Theodore appeared on the scene, and needless to say his arrival was somewhat of a surprise. Indeed, he tells in the "Autobiographical Fragment" that an older sister "had finished the 'Family Tree' with the tenth." "However," Parker continues, "a place was soon found for the new-comer both in the needle-work and the hearts of the household."⁵ It is clear that young Theodore quickly became the favorite in his brown, homespun petticoats and with his long, flaxen curls. There is little reason to doubt that his childhood was robust and happy. In the winter he took particular delight in slipping out-doors and dashing about in the snow barefoot. Summer found him skipping off across the meadow to a "dry and sheltered spot" where, as he later recalled:

[I would] watch the great yellow clouds of April that rolled their huge shapes far above my head, filling my eye with their strange, fantastic, beautiful, and ever-changing forms, and my mind with wonder at what they were, and how they came there.⁶

Thus Parker was later able to say, "I have swam in clear, sweet waters all my days."⁷

Not all the waters were quite as pleasant, however. When he was christened at the age of two and a half we have perhaps Parker's first recorded protest against religious forms. A larger convocation of friends and relatives than usual made the event impressive. But, as the water was sprinkled on his head, young Parker vigorously fought off the dismayed clergyman and lustily shouted, "Oh, don't!"⁸ Of more serious consequence was the effect of the doctrine of eternal damnation on the boy, who heard

it expounded so convincingly from a near-by pulpit that, as he said, "I wept with terror as I laid in my bed and prayed, till between praying and weeping sleep gave me repose." ⁹

If any event in the life of young Parker was to foreshadow the man who was to come, however, it was a mysterious visitation he received on the road to school one day. Although it is clear that this encounter did much to give purpose to his life and first made the boy think that he "might be somebody," it is mentioned in few of the biographies. For our account this afternoon we have to turn to George Ripley's sketch:

An incident occurred to him when a lad, about nine years old, which made a marked impression on his mind. He often refers to this, at the present day, as one of the influences which gave a decided direction to his future life. As he was going to school one day, he was accosted by a stranger with long silvery hair, and venerable aspect. Theodore had never seen him before, and to this day, has not been able to discover the name. He almost seemed to spring suddenly from the earth, and as suddenly to disappear. The old man entered into conversation with the boy, who listened with greedy ears. He talked to him about his studies, his habits, his aims in life — the need of good and great men to serve their country — told how much a bright boy, like himself, might become — exhorted him to be faithful in his duties — to aim at great things — and after walking with him about a mile and a half, left the wondering boy, as mysteriously as he had come upon his path. ¹⁰

From this point forward, as Parker's life attracted increased attention, its course is easier to follow. We know that he distinguished himself as a scholar reading widely in Homer, Plutarch and Virgil, not to mention Pope, Milton, Cowley, and Dryden — before he was eleven; and memorized poems of 500 to 1000 lines upon a single reading. He eventually mastered over twenty languages. He registered for work at Harvard in 1830, but reported to the college only to take examinations. As we know he later translated and edited DeWette's work on the Old Testament, prepared his own *Defence*, a marvel of legal learning, when indicted by the Grand Jury for aiding a fugitive slave, and collected one of the largest private libraries of his time, over 11,000 volumes and 2500 pamphlets.

It is not the books we are interested in this afternoon, however, it is the man behind the books *we* seek. The scholar as a man is distinguished by his sense of humor, intensity, and breadth of knowledge. Even as a boy Parker's serious study was broken from time to time by his irrepressible sense of humor and play. One incident in particular, told by Parker's early schoolmaster, John Hastings, suggests a spirit of frivolity not unlike that of most boys:

The rage among the boys, it seems, was for pop-guns, — an instrument made usually of a quill, and loaded with a piece of potato: the pushing in of a rammer at the larger end of the tube compressed the air, and the potato came out at the small end with a report loud enough to startle a large room. It was a harmless weapon, the bite whereof was in the bark. Theodore procured from

his elder brother a pop-gun of uncommon caliber, and carried it to school. The weapon being new and untried, the hush of the school-room tempting, and the master's back suggestive of opportunity, the experiment on sound was then and there hazarded. In an instant, all heads were raised; the master faced about with inquisitive eyes: but at that instant no boy was studying so hard as Parker; he was devouring his book! The success of the first experiment inspired a second: but this time the master looked up a second too soon; the culprit was detected in the very act. There was a challenge, a summons, a reprimand; the weapon was confiscated [it crackled merrily in the stove], and order was restored.¹¹

Much later when Parker himself was called upon to teach school he was interviewed by the local committee. His interview, found in Peter Dean's biography, is suggestive of the qualities required in a nineteenth century school teacher:

The old Chairman of the committee, an up-country specimen, more fitted to be receiving instruction in a school than the governor and director of one, when Theodore appeared before the board, asked gruffly — 'What's your name?' 'Theodore Parker.' 'Where do you belong?' 'Lexington!' 'Be you the son of Captn. Parker who fit the Battle of Lexington?' 'No, I am his grandson.' 'What! be you Captn. Parker's grandson, who fit that battle?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Well, then I guess you'll do to keep our school.'¹²

After finishing his undergraduate work at Harvard, Parker proceeded to the Divinity School, where his academic accomplishment remained impressive but where his roughish humor continued to give him away. One day when Parker referred to the Apostle to the Gentiles as "Old Paul," his professor, Henry Ware, Jr., promptly rebuked the offense. "Yes, sir, you are right," replied Parker, "I should have said, 'the gentleman of Tarsus.'" ¹³

When in Divinity School Parker was not above taking part in a prank with his class-mates, one of whom, C. P. Cranch, tells this story, found in original form in the Boston Public Library's Caroline Thayer Scrapbook:

I remember a whimsical and original joke of his at the Divinity School. It was a play of animal spirits, a practical jest, a protest and a satire combined. Two or three of us divinity students — I remember John Dwight was one — were in full musical blast at something — fluting or singing, I forget which — in one of the rooms of Divinity Hall. Immediately opposite was Parker's room. He was evidently engaged in much more serious study, and more in the line of his future profession, than we were. Still we were quite unaware of our disturbing him, or we should have sunk our music to a *pianissimo*, or adjourned it to another place or hour. Theodore had, however, borne it some time without protesting. Presently there was a peculiar 'movement' in the entry, just outside our door, executed upon a peculiar and by no means musical instrument, — a sort of *obligato ad libitum bass*, — thrown in as an accompaniment to our strains. On opening the door to ascertain the nature of these strange sounds, there was Theodore, who had left his folios of the Latin fathers, had rushed into the cellar, and brought up a wood-horse, saw, and log of wood, on which he was exercising his vigorous sinews — see-saw, see-saw — to our utter discomfort and amusement. As for Theodore, he barely smiled.¹⁴

Such episodes, however, were but a release from the scholar's usual intensity. At one time he fancied that his memory was growing feeble. A class-mate at Divinity School reports having found him "posted before an enormous historical chart, covering one side of his room, which contained all the dates and incidents from Adam. He was committing this to memory."¹⁵

Perhaps Parker's intensity is most clearly suggested by how deeply engrossed he became in his scholarly pursuits, even when walking out-doors. As in the case of his wit, this characteristic traces back to his youth. Abram English Brown tells the story in his paper, "Beneath Old Roof Trees," the manuscript of which can be found in the Boston Public Library:

We went together to the village to attend service at the meeting house on Sundays. It was there he had access to an old association library, from which he drew books to use at home. I have seen him open a book when starting home after service, and become oblivious to all else. He would become so absorbed as to lose his bearings, and occasionally come in contact with a tree or stone wall; but tacking about he would start on again, still engrossed in some deep study, that offered no attraction to me or the other boys who were in our company.¹⁶

We know of a time during Divinity School, however, when Parker was so thoroughly absorbed in his scholarly interests when walking that he was unable to avoid an obstacle in his path. The most complete account I have found of this incident is given by George Ellis in a clipping from the Boston Public Library's Rufus Leighton Scrapbook:

Among the memories of these divinity days there comes back to me an incident in the experience of Parker which at the time caused anxiety. He and myself, with H. G. D. Phillips of the class before ours, were returning one Sunday afternoon from the State Prison, on an errand of good will in connection with the formation of a library there for the use of the prisoners. As we were walking home rapidly through E. Cambridge, Parker had the strong momentum in his motions . . . working his sturdy limbs, his head inclined downward, as he enlivened the way with free discourse. Directly in his path on the sidewalk rose a part of a tree, perhaps a foot in diameter and 10' high, which had been left as a post when the top was cut off. Against this unnoticed obstruction Parker with force struck his broad, full forehead, and instantly fell on his back, helpless and unconscious. We moved him, with aid, into an Irish tenement near the sidewalk, and piled his forehead with copious bathings. It was a considerable time before his consciousness came back to him, when the protuberance of his ample brow was doubled. Only as the darkness was approaching could we venture to pursue our way. Then, with the old-fashioned appliance for the misadventures of boyhood, a sheet of brown paper soaked in water and bound with a handkerchief over his forehead, we, carrying his hat, and giving him a strong arm on either side, got him to his room in the hall.¹⁷

The final quality of the man as a scholar is the breadth of his knowledge. He was not only steeped in matters of theology and philosophy, as we would expect, but intimately acquainted with such subjects as literature,

politics, and economics, and well versed in agriculture and other crafts of the working man. William Seward came to Boston in order to canvass the political situation with Parker, and Henry Wilson wrote, "I want to see you some day when you can give me an hour or two, for the purpose of consultation in regard to affairs."¹⁸ From a clipping in the Rufus Leighton Scrapbook we are told that "one of the few eminent classical scholars of New England" entertained this view of Parker:

Theodore Parker was the only man with whom I could sit down and seriously discuss a disputed reading, and find him familiar with all that had been written upon it. I know for one, and there are many who will bear the same testimony, that I never went to Mr. Parkers to talk over a subject which I had just made a speciality without finding that on that particular matter he happened to know, without special investigation, more than I did. This extended beyond books, as for instance any point connected with the habits of animals and the phenomena of out-door nature.¹⁹

Thomas Wentworth Higginson in his book, *Contemporaries*, tells of yet another area of Parker's knowledge:

I was once with him in the society of an intelligent Quaker farmer, when the conversation fell on agriculture: the farmer held his own ably for a time; but long after he was drained dry, our wonderful companion still flowed on exhaustless, with accounts of Nova Scotia ploughing and Tennessee hoeing, and all things rural, ancient modern, good and bad, till it seemed as if the one amusing and interesting theme in the universe were the farm.²⁰

Parker's knowledge was of course a result of his devoted study, which averaged 12-17 hours a day and was continued even when he travelled the lyceum circuit. James Freeman Clarke in his *Tribute* to Parker pronounced exactly one-hundred years ago recalls meeting him when travelling:

I remember meeting him on the cars . . . He had a carpet-bag with him, filled with German, Greek, and Latin books. . . . On Monday morning, he filled his carpet-bag, and went to the place where he was to lecture Monday night; all day long he studied his books, and at night delivered his lecture. Then on Tuesday he would go to the next place, studying his books all day, and lecturing at night. So he would go on through the week, until Friday, when he would be back again to Boston, with the carpet bag exhausted, with every one of those books gutted of its contents, with the whole substance of them in his brain, so that he knew all about every one of them, and could give a perfect analysis of them all, from beginning to end.²¹

Although there are numerous stories testifying to Parker's extraordinary memory, one last one from Higginson will suffice to conclude our view of the man behind the scholar's spectacles:

It happened to me, many years since, in the course of some historical inquiries, to which for fuller information in regard to the barbarous feudal codes of the Middle Ages, — as the Salic, Burgundian, and Ripuarian, — before the time of Charlemagne. The common historians, even Hallam, gave no very satisfactory information and referred to no very available books; and supposing it to be a matter of which every well-read lawyer would at least know some-

thing, I asked help of the most scholarly member of that profession within my reach — a man who is now, by the way, a leader in the United States Senate. He regretted his inability to give me any aid, but referred me to a friend of his, who was already eminent for legal learning. The friend soon arrived, but owned, with some regret, that he had paid no attention to that particular subject, and did not even know what books to refer to, but he would at least ascertain what they were, and let me know. (I may add that although he is now a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, I have never heard from him again.) Stimulated by ill-success, I aimed higher, and struck at the Supreme Bench of Massachusetts, breaking in on the mighty repose of his Honor with the name Charlemagne. 'Charlemagne?' responded my lord judge, rubbing his curly brow, — 'Charlemagne lived, I think, in the sixth century?' Dismayed, I retreated, with little further inquiry; and sure of one man, at least, to whom law meant also history and literature, I took refuge in Charles Sumner. That accomplished scholar, himself for once at fault, could only frankly advise me to do at last what I ought to have done at first, — to apply to Theodore Parker. I did so. 'Go,' he replied instantly, 'to alcove twenty-four, shelf one hundred and thirteen, of the College Library at Cambridge, and you will find the information you need in a thick quarto, bound in vellum, and letter 'Potgiesser de Statu Servorum.' I straightway sent for Potgiesser, and found my fortune made. It was one of those patient old German treatises which cost the labor of one man's life to compile and another's to exhaust, and I had no reason to suppose that any reader had disturbed its repose until that unwearied industry had explored the library.²²

Any effort claiming to explore the personal, and particularly the private, life of the historical Parker cannot ignore his role as a husband. He appears always to have been fond of women. At an early age Theodore lost his immunity to the fairer sex and contracted a susceptibility which he was never to lose. Parker himself tells the story in a letter to George Ripley:

I was about seven years old, when a very pretty little girl made her appearance at our humble village school. She was from seven to eight years of age. She fascinated me to such a degree that I could no longer look at my books, and I was scolded for not having got my lessons; a thing that had never happened to me before, and that never happened to me again after the departure of the little fairy. She remained only a week with us, and I wept bitterly when she went away. She was so pretty! I dared not speak to her, but I liked to walk around her, like a butterfly around a flower in the field. She was called Narcissa. She fell into the ocean of time, and disappeared before I had attained my eighth year.²³

When he sailed to Barnstable for a temporary pulpit after finishing Divinity School, Parker found that most of his fellow-passengers were ladies, and moreover that he had to share a single cabin with them for the night. At first Parker felt uncomfortable at the arrangement, but soon appears to have appreciated the situation. I think we should let Parker explain his way out of this one too:

The ladies went down about half-past eight; for it was cold. Soon after nine I descended, feet foremost, — perpendicularly almost. They had gotten

into their several berths, and there were lying, the curtains still undrawn. I sat rather awkwardly, and chatted and laughed with them, who did not seem at all disturbed by the peculiarity of the scene. By and by I, too, crept into a crib, — a lady above me, another at my head, and a third at my feet. I had the *poet's* corner. ²⁴

Throughout his life Parker delighted in surrounding himself with women. "My companions of choice, and not of necessity," he said, "are almost all women." ²⁵ "The other day I met a young woman in the street, and our *eyes met*. I felt a sensation of unspeakable delight which lasted all morning." ²⁶ In later years, a permanent member of his household was an older lady who served as his secretary, a Miss Stevenson, whom he described as "a woman of fine talents and culture, interested in all the literatures and humanities." ²⁷

And yet, of course, there was *one* to whom Parker was supremely devoted, his own Lydia. While still in Watertown, Parker fell in love with Lydia Cabot, who was teaching a class in the church school he supervised and who lodged in the same home where he lived. Here is Parker's subsequent conversation with his father, in which he broke the news:

I walked to father's; he soon returned from church, and I caught him in the garden, and informed him of the 'fatal' affair, if you will call it so. The tear actually started to his aged eye. 'Indeed,' said he. 'Indeed,' I replied, and attempted to describe *some* of [Lydia's] good qualities. 'It is a good while to wait,' he observed. 'Yes, but we are young, and I hope I have your approval.' 'Yes, yes! I should be pleased with anyone you would select; but, Theodore,' said he, and the words sank deep into my heart, 'you must be a good *man* and a good *husband*, which is a great undertaking.' ²⁸

Courtship lasted through Divinity School and candidating during which young Parker wrote his beloved Lydia:

Only think, that after a little bit of courtship of some four years, we are at length on the very brink of matrimony! Within a span's length of the abyss! Without a parish too! Think of that! £117 a year, maybe — maybe much less — to support a wife. Why, I intend to commence such a rigorous system of *sparing* that I shall never cross a *t* nor dot an *i*; for I'll save ink. I dreamed last night of being at a bookstore; and when the clerk showed me some book which I had long been seeking, and at a price most villainously cheap, 'Oh, no,' said I, 'I shall *never* buy more books; at any rate, never so cheap. I am a-going to be married' and down went the corners of my mouth till they touched my stock. ²⁹

Following the courtship we hear relatively little about Mrs. Parker, who was quiet and reserved but apparently a fine hostess and an indispensable comfort to her husband. Julia Ward Howe in her *Reminiscences* gives us a rare glimpse of Lydia Parker:

To my husband Parker spoke of the excellence of his wife's discernment of character. He would say, 'My quiet little wife, with her simple intuition, understands people more readily than I do. I sometimes invite a stranger to my house, and tell her that she will find him as pleasant as I have found him.

It may turn out so; but if my wife says, 'Theodore, I don't like that man; there's something wrong about him,' I always find in the end that I have been mistaken, — that her judgment was correct.³⁰

It was this "quiet, little wife" that Parker playfully nicknamed "Bear" or "Bearsie." Peter Dean describes some of the implications of this name:

He first applied it to her at Berne, in 1844, because of her delight in Bruin, the tutelar deity of the city, enshrined in his capacious pit. But it also came from more than a mere passing whim. While he took pleasure in animals of every description, the bear was his especial favourite, and he was never tired of watching its unwieldy movements. He said bears were great humorous children, with a wary Scotch vein in them. His house was full of figures of bears, in plaster and ivory and wood, from Berne, and in seal-metal. Few things gave him greater delight than to be presented with an odder figure of a bear than usual. In the latter part of his life he wore a bear-pin in his scarf, presented him by Miss Cobbe. He was a connoisseur in bears, as some are in *bric-a-brac*.

He once collected materials for an article on them, and for the purpose found out and studied all the bears known to be living in the district for miles around. Caricatures of public characters represented as bears were hung upon the walls of his study, his letters sent home frequently describe bears that he came across, and if he got into a zoological garden, leaning over the bear-pit, talking with and feeding Bruin, he could hardly be got home to his dinner.³¹

The arrival of a new bear to his collection delighted him immensely. "The new bear came the other day," he wrote Catherine Johnson, "I assembled all the other bears of the family; introduced them to each other, and left them in their mutual admiration society."³²

We have said Parker was a husband, but unhappily we cannot speak of him as father. One of the sorrows which weighed most heavily on his heart was the fact that he and Lydia were unable to have children. For as he said, "I want some one always in the arms of my heart to caress and comfort: unless I have this, I mourn and weep."³³ And so, childless, he opened his heart to the children of his friends. Once he confided to his journal, "I love to have them call me Mr. Parkie — a tender diminutive, which does my dry heart good."³⁴ John White Chadwick in his biography tells us something of how the little visitors were received:

Of all his visitors none were more welcome than the little children, who, climbing painfully to his upper floor, and, much out of breath, knocking and crying, 'Parkie!' 'Parkie!' were let in with an unfeigned delight. He might be deep in study or in mid-course of his sermon: for the time being his only care was to entertain his guest. He did that royally. There were toys kept for such visitors, and the great family collection of bears. . . . For a newcomer there was always one of these to spare. He had pet names for the children, 'Bits o' Blossoms,' 'Mites o'Teants,' and one, who grew up to be Boston's first musical critic, was 'Hippopotamus,' a name of which there were such diminutives and variants as he could invent. When he went lecturing there were never so many books stuffed in his gripsack to be read on the train but

that a nook was found for a little bag of candy, whereby fretful children were beguiled, while tired mothers got *their* sweetness in the sympathy of the unknown friend pleading with them to suffer the little children to come unto him.³⁵

Not a few students and others away from home the first time came under his fatherly influence. S. J. May, the son of an old friend, explains something of the atmosphere of the Parker household and of the care he received:

Established in Cambridge, he at once extended to me that friendship father and mother valued so much, and made me familiarly welcome in his quiet, pleasant home, and conscious that he was watching over me with an unintrusive fatherly care. He constantly inquired as to my progress in study, discussed matters on which I was engaged, and advised me both in reference to them and to the homelier subjects of my health and comfort. I can hear him coming down stairs, with his tread so firm yet light, two steps at a time, from his study, humming or whistling some little quiet strain; and then came his hearty hand-shake, and sweet smile, and cordial greeting, in that voice with something suggesting gruffness, yet so gentle as to be musical. There was never a kinder voice.

His meals used always to be exceedingly simple and light. But I remember that, when he discovered I had planned a system of diet too meagre, he remarked it, and gave me good counsel in regard to more generous food. So, discovering that I was sleeping, for economy's sake, on a husk mattress, he stopped me one evening as he was going up stairs, thrust into my hand a bill, and charged me to go at once and get a hair mattress. Every year, knowing that my father's means were small, he sent a considerable check to me to help pay my college-bills. I believe he did the same for more than one of the young men in college, whom he had taken likewise under his fatherly care.³⁶

When Parker and Lydia married in 1837 they settled comfortably into the quiet West Roxbury parish. But just the next year, Emerson was to trigger the second Unitarian controversy with his "Divinity School Address," and Parker, never able to resist a good fight, soon joined in with his "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity." Before long his reputation as a preacher as well as heretic won for him the pulpit of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society in Boston.

The record of Parker's preaching is impressive. His manuscript sermons fill over twenty bulky volumes presently distributed between the American Unitarian Association and the Boston Public Library. His "Sermon Record Book," which is in our Historical Library, indicates that "during the twenty-two years of his ministry Parker wrote 925 sermons and preached approximately fifteen hundred times."³⁷ Something his records do not indicate, however, is that during the last fifteen years of his ministry he consistently commanded weekly audiences of 3,000! In the Caroline Thayer Scrapbook one finds this report of a correspondent of the Liverpool *Northern Times* who thought he would try to find his way to hear Parker one Sunday morning:

It was Sunday, and Theodore Parker was to preach in the Music Hall. I inquired the way to that place, but might have found it without asking; for a living tide from all quarters of the city flowed thither. I fell into the stream, and was carried right into the hall. . . .³⁸

It is not the facts about Parker's preaching that we are primarily interested in this afternoon, however, but the man behind the preacher's desk in the Music Hall. The man and his self-consciousness is most clearly reflected in his public prayers, which reveal his sensitivity and directness in speaking to human needs. Prayer was for Parker as natural a function as breathing. "The natural attitude of my mind has always been prayerful," he said, "A snatch of such feeling passes through me as I walk in the streets, or engage in any work. I sing prayers when I loiter in the woods, or travel the quiet road."³⁹

J. H. Morrison, who sat near Parker on the stage of the Music Hall when he preached, recalled in an article in the *Unitarian Review* that:

More than half the time, in his prayer, I could see the tears run down his face before he was done. Two years, on attempting to read on Easter Sunday the story of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, he could not get through, but, overcome by his emotions, had to sit down, and give way to his tears.⁴⁰

When Louisa May Alcott was "first setting forth to seek her fortune" she attended Parker's service. Many years later when writing the preface to Parker's book of *Prayers* she recalled her impression of his prayer on that day which for her "was the beginning of a new life":

The slow, soft folding of the hands, the reverent bowing of the good gray head, the tears that sometimes veiled the voice, the simplicity, frankness, and devout earnestness, made both words and manner wonderfully eloquent; and the phrase, 'Our Father and our Mother God,' was inexpressibly sweet and beautiful, — seeming to invoke both power and love to sustain and comfort the anxious, overburdened hearts of those who listened and went away to labor and to wait with fresh hope and faith.⁴¹

Parker's objective was not only the Louisa May Alcotts in his congregation, however. He sought to speak simply and with meaning for common people. An anonymous contributor to the Boston *Evening Transcript* tells of the effect of Parker upon a Yankee sailor and of the sailor's effect on Parker:

Many years ago about the time when Parker began to preach in Music Hall, I was called upon one day by a Yankee sailor, who was a good deal of a thinker . . . This sailor, told me that he had not only been to hear Parker but had visited him in his study the day after he had heard the sermon. Parker was interested in the man, and asked him what he thought of the sermon.

"The sermon was first-rate, Mr. Parker," said the sailor, 'but I didn't care much for the prayer.'

'What was there about the prayer that you didn't like?' asked Parker. Now, Theodore Parker had a way, as you may remember, of making pretty long prayers, and of embodying the Lord's Prayer in them, every Sunday. He

closed his prayer generally with the Lord's Prayer. So he might have guessed what the sailor was coming to when he answered —

'I know it was from the Bible, Mr. Parker, that sentence in your prayer that I didn't like; but I don't like it, all the same.' 'Well, what sentence was it?'

'It was where you prayed the Lord not to lead us into temptation. Now, do you suppose, Mr. Parker, that the Lord *would* lead us into temptation?'

Theodore Parker remained silent for a moment, and then said, 'No, my good man, I don't believe he would.'

'Then,' said the sailor, 'I wouldn't pray to him not to do it.'

The sailor left the great liberal. It was some weeks after the incident that the sailor called upon me. I was curious to see for myself whether he had told the truth, and went to hear Parker the next Sunday at Music Hall to observe whether he had changed his practice with regard to the prayer, and found that the sailor's criticism had, indeed, made its impression . . .

Instead of saying, 'Lead us not into temptation,' he said, 'Lead us from temptation. . . .' ⁴²

A final period of Parker's life which reflects his self-consciousness and which deserves special emphasis on this occasion is the time of illness which led to his death. Here the historical Parker impresses us most with his energy and will. In addition to his study of twelve-to-seventeen hours a day, Parker sustained a voluminous correspondence, writing thousands of letters a year, preached twice a week, and lectured in every Northern state east of the Mississippi to sixty or a hundred thousand people a year. His irrepressible energy is evident in these incidents which Frothingham relates:

'What is that man doing? Cradling wheat. I must take a turn at that.' So out he jumps, springs over the bars, and invites the man to take a rest while he performs the task. The gentleman in the city coat and hat proves equal to the occasion: the smile of incredulity disappears from the farmer's face in a few minutes; and in half an hour he is convinced that his coadjutor must have been a farmer once. . . . A friend tells me, that journeying one winter's day from Boston to New York where he was engaged to lecture, and being detained at New Haven, he kept himself warm by jumping Jim Crow on the bridge that spans the gloomy station. . . . On a sultry summer's day by the seaside he was seen with a scythe, mowing down the Canada thistle that was threatening to overspread the fields. ⁴³

He once walked from New York to Boston, averaging thirty miles a day.

It was the lectures, however, which broke Parker's health. He subjected himself to night after night in railroad cars, stations, or at best between the "damp sheets" of a tavern, and to meals of "potatoes swimming in fat" and "fried fish as cold as when drawn from the lake" from "crockery which sticks to your hands." ⁴⁴ Warning symptoms of difficulty in speaking, sharp pains in the side, a severe cough, fever, night-sweats, and chills were defiantly ignored. He contracted pleurisy and an effusion of water on the lungs, had an operation, lost twenty pounds, admitted that it was all a

nuisance, but insisted, "It did not much interfere with my work."⁴⁵ Then, on January 9, 1859, Parker wrote to his congregation, "I shall not speak to you today; for this morning, a little after four o'clock, I had a slight attack of bleeding in the lungs or throat."⁴⁶ The "slight attack of bleeding" proved to be a serious hemorrhage of the lungs.

Upon the insistence of his physicians, Parker put his affairs in order and prepared to depart for more congenial climates. Not the least among these final tasks were the good-byes to the many friends. James Freeman Clarke tells of his final farewell:

When Theodore Parker was about going away, and I went to see him for the last time, he followed me to the door of his study, and, putting his hands on my shoulders, he kissed my cheek, and said, 'James, if you and I never meet again in this world, we have the happiness of knowing that there never has been between us one word, or one feeling, or one action, of unkindness.' In the Old World, you will see men who carry in their button holes a red ribbon — the sign that they belong to the Legion of Honor. As long as I live, I shall carry (not apparent to others, but known to myself) the mark of that tender, fraternal kiss on my cheek. It is to me the sign of belonging to the Legion of Honor.⁴⁷

From New York Parker sailed to the West Indies and then to England. In London he met his old friend Charles Sumner, and they drove about for more than six hours seeing the city. Afterwards Sumner went home to rest. Parker decided to go about on foot for more exercise.

As we have already seen, Parker always felt a close kinship with nature. During these final months, whether by coincidence or some mystical union, this identity seems to have been intensified. Near his workshop in Lexington he planted a white ash tree in earlier years, which until the year of his death always bore two crops of leaves. From England Parker went to the continent where he visited his old friend, Professor Desor, at Montreux. While there an incident occurred which is described in the article, "Recollections of the late M. Faure," accessible in the Caroline Thayer Scrapbook:

Mr. Faure related an incident which occurred when Theodore Parker was spending several weeks at a house in the mountains near Neufchatel. The gentleman of the house had occasion to cut down a large tree. All present expressed their opinion whether the tree was sound or not. Parker said, 'Let me cut it,' and taking the axe, said, 'If it is sound, I shall recover.' When he cut into it, it was hollow, and he exclaimed, 'I am lost.'⁴⁸

Then on to Rome, where Parker used the last of his energy exploring the eternal city. He stood in the middle of the Coliseum and later remarked:

What recollections come up! The gladiators, the wild beasts, the Christians, the emperors, the armies; Rome fallen; the new Rome — and that, too, fallen. Oh! One could move the stones by preaching here. I could not help looking at the place professionally, and thinking it would be a fine place to preach *Parkerism* in.⁴⁹

But it was all too much for Parker and he was soon confined to his bed. The rains came; Rome began to grate on his nerves; he became obsessed with leaving the old city so he could taste the free air of Florence before he died. Prof. Desor, who accompanied the party from Montreux, tells of trying to persuade Parker not to make the trip:

His condition was so much worse that we became anxious as to the issue of the journey. He, on the contrary, would not hear a word about postponing it. One day, when I found him reclining on his bed alone, I thought it my duty to apprise him of my apprehensions concerning the journey. 'Should you fail upon the route, to die in a tavern!' He smiled and asked me to sit down near him; he took my hand and said, 'Listen to me, my friend. You know that I have some command over myself, and that I have sometimes put my will to the test. Well: I will not die here; I will not leave my bones in this detested soil; I will go to Florence, and I will get there — that I promise you.' ⁵⁰

So, the little band made its way by jolting carriage to Florence, but just barely. It was now only a matter of weeks. Slowly a soft mist descended over the faculties. "Come, Bearsie," he would say to Lydia, "let us go and see our friends." ⁵¹ He wrote his old neighbor, John Ayres, "Will you come over to-morrow and see us, just after your dinnertime? Bring me last year's apple if you can, or any new melon." ⁵² Once he imagined he was back in Boston:

He was in his house, his library. One day he declared that all was confusion there; and it was: the careful house-keeper [Mary Drew] was sweeping it at the moment, unconscious that the master's exorbitant sensibility was restlessly moving about the room, disturbed by her dust. ⁵³

At times he would rally himself to bid fond adieus to those around him. "Lay your head down on the pillow, 'Bearsie,' and sleep, for you have not slept for a long time." ⁵⁴ But gradually the sense of time and space blurred until they became eternity. And on May 10, 1860, Theodore Parker fell into his final sleep so peacefully that the vigilant ones scarce knew he had gone.

And so, our quest of the historical Parker, at least for this afternoon, draws to a close. Thanks to the faithful descriptions by his contemporaries we have been able to see Theodore Parker the child as robust and happy; the scholar as distinguished by his sense of humor, intensity, and breadth of knowledge; the husband with a universal admiration for women and love for children; the preacher for his sensitivity and directness, particularly in his prayers; and even in the mortally stricken man an indomitable sense of energy and will.

But at the critical moments of his life the elements of his self-consciousness which emerge most sharply are few. His close identification with the natural world stemmed from his youth, undergirded his theology, and came

to its fullest expression as he neared his death. Despite his prominence in public life he was essentially a family man, a good neighbor. It was his wife and friends whom he turned to in difficult times, with whom his sense of humor and inner beauty emerged most clearly, and whom he remembered in his last moments. He was a man bound up in the world, caught up in humanity, who did not evade society's claim upon him and who never relinquished his claim upon society. Herein was the source of both the tragedy and the greatness of his life.

Although he died at less than fifty, his was not a half-life. It was a full life, lived with an earnestness and a sense of dedication that has seldom been equalled. He threw himself into life, as into a great sea. That somehow he was not always critical, objective, and in full control of his destiny is but a tribute to the force of the tides that drove him, that buffeted and broke him upon the rocks, and that washed him up on the shores of a distant land. But because of him we today are free from the undertow of the past.

NOTES

1. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), p. 6.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
3. John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker* (New York: D. Appleton and Co.), I, 17-26.
4. Both items are now deposited in the A. U. A. safe: Green's "Anecdotes . . ." are classified under Miscellaneous No. 5; Ripley's sketch is in Letter volume I, pp. 332-333.
5. Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
7. Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Theodore Parker: a Biography* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1874), p. 18.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
9. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 30.
10. Ripley, *op. cit.*
11. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
12. Peter Dean, *The Life and Teachings of Theodore Parker* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1877), p. 16.
13. Albert Reville, *The Life and Writings of Theodore Parker* (London: British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1877), pp. 21-22.

14. C. P. Cranch, "A Reminiscence of Theodore Parker," newspaper clipping in Caroline Thayer Scrapbook (Mss. in Boston Public Library), Vol. I.
15. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 65.
16. Abram English Brown, "Beneath Old Roof Trees," typewritten article in the Rufus Leighton Scrapbook (Mss. in the Boston Public Library).
17. George E. Ellis, sermon clipping in Rufus Leighton Scrapbook, *op. cit.*
18. Roy Clyde McCall, "The Public Speaking Principles and Practice of Theodore Parker," (Doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa, 1936), p. 28.
19. Newspaper clipping, Rufus Leighton Scrapbook, *op. cit.*
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21. James Freeman Clarke, *Tributes to Theodore Parker* (Boston: Published on the Fraternity, 1860), pp. 50-51.
22. Higginson, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.
23. Reville, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
24. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
25. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 290.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 241.
28. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 61.
29. Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
30. Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1899), p. 162.
31. Dean, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.
32. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 287.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
34. John White Chadwick, *Theodore Parker, Preacher and Reformer* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1900), p. 296.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-248.
37. See also Roy Clyde McCall, "Theodore Parker," *The History and Criticism of American Public Address*, ed. William Norwood Brigance, Vol. I. (New York: McGraw Hill Co., 1943), p. 238.
38. Clipping of *Northern Times*, Caroline Thayer Scrapbook, Vol. II (Mss. in Boston Public library).
39. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 336.
40. J. H. Morrison, "Theodore Parker as an Example to Young Ministers," *Unitarian Review*, I (March, 1875), 251.
41. Theodore Parker, *Prayers* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1882), p. iv.

42. Newspaper clipping from *Evening Transcript*, Caroline Thayer Scrapbook, Vol. II (Mss. in Boston Public Library).
43. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 500-501.
44. Weiss, *op. cit.*, I, 305.
45. Henry Steele Commager, *Theodore Parker, Yankee Crusader* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1936), p. 223.
46. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 504.
47. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
48. Newspaper clipping, "Recollections of the late M. Faure," Caroline Thayer Scrapbook, Vol. II. *op. cit.*
49. Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
51. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 533.
52. Weiss, *op. cit.*, II, 439.
53. Frothingham, *op. cit.*, p. 533.
54. Weiss, *op. cit.*

JOHN GOODWIN AND JOHN BIDDLE: RATIONAL THEOLOGY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF PURITANISM.

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. . . . For my self, my love is such to the precious souls of men, that I cannot knowingly suffer any suspicious Doctrine, or loose opinion in the things of God, to pass thorow the world neer unto me, unexamined, especially when any considerable numbers of men are likely to suffer: which, though it be a thanklesse ingagement, and very obnoxious to those, who love either ease, or honour, more than cleannesse of judgement, and purenesse of minde and understanding; yet it is a proper and effectuall course to preserve the Doctrine of the Gospel, if not absolutely free from all, yet from that intermixture of errour, which commonly issueth from between the feet of supine incogitancy and sloth in those, who are intrusted with the ministry of it.

John Goodwin, *The Epistle Dedicatory,
The Divine Authority of the Scriptures
Asserted*, March 26, 1647.

I.

Among others, Karl Marx has suggested that within each period of history there are contradictory forces in operation which lead eventually to its transformation into a period whose character is qualitatively different. Whether or not such a general statement is true, it is the case that Puritanism, considered as an historical movement, did contain within itself contradictory tendencies which led to its transformation into a subsequent movement essentially different in character from itself. Beginning as a movement during the reign of Henry VIII Puritanism first attempted to reform the worship of the Church. Its distinguishing feature was dissatisfaction with the established forms of worship, stemming from its stress upon intense, individual religious experience. To Puritanism, the established forms of worship of the Church represented a block rather than a means to true religious experience. Consequently, its energies were directed successively to worship and vestments, then polity, and finally to the total national life and its political organization. But within this reforming movement there was no ultimately unifying principle which might have enabled it to maintain itself under the pressure of unfavorable external circumstances. Rather, during the late phases of Puritan development it became apparent that its own internal logic was to cause its essential character to change, and, hence, to

pass out of existence as an historical phenomenon. It fragmented into a large number of diverse sects, and its power as a movement for reforming ecclesiastical and political life was destroyed.

The purpose of this essay is to discuss one particular aspect of Puritanism which contributed to its decline — i. e. the effect of rationalist method in theology. I hope to illustrate, through the examples of John Goodwin and John Biddle, how the emphasis upon reason within Puritan theology prepared the way for the proliferation of Puritanism into a variety of sects, through the denial of certain of the doctrines which had been vital to its reforming spirit. The energy which had been devoted to reforming worship and polity was increasingly shifted to a concern for theological content, as doctrine itself became a subject appropriate to reform. This is not to say, of course, that theological controversy was the only, or even a primary factor leading to the disintegration of Puritanism as an historical movement. But certainly the theological aspect was one of the factors which, under the pressure of external events, contributed to the fragmentation of Puritanism. During the last phases of Puritanism, indeed, external circumstances contributed to the increased influence of rational theology, which added to its disrupting effect.

The problem of Puritan theology was that there was no strong ultimate principle in its doctrine of God which might have given unity to the movement. Rather, it was of the nature of Covenant theology — the dominant element within Puritan theology — that it was susceptible to vast differences of interpretation. Although Covenant theology clearly implies a limitation upon divine activity in relation to man — God is not an arbitrary sovereign — it does not specify the precise nature of this relationship between God and man nor the means by which it can be discovered. Consequently the focal point of Puritan theology is this relationship between God and man and the way man learns about it and fulfils it — i. e. the terms of the Covenant.

Within the theology of Puritanism, then, there are three sources by which man learns of his relationship to God: the Word, primarily the written Word of scripture; the Holy Spirit; and Reason. These three are affirmed by all Puritans, but the relative stress placed upon each indicates a different understanding of the relationship between man and God. For all Puritans man is fallen and must be reconciled to God, but by emphasizing one or another of the means by which man learns of this reconciliation, several types of theology were permitted to develop. One of these types was the one with which this essay is concerned — the rational type, represented here by John Goodwin and John Biddle.

On the most abstract level, the rational type emphasizes the relationship of man to God as one of reason or understanding. There are categories of

the human mind — reason — which correspond to the basic structures of the universe, and which enable man to know and to fulfil the terms of the Covenant. Accordingly, correct doctrine becomes a matter of great interest within this type, since it is the attainment of Truth which carries man toward salvation. This does not mean, of course, that revelation is unnecessary — Truth is contained completely in scripture — but revelation does not contradict reason. It clarifies what has otherwise been blurred through the fall of man. It was this supposition of the harmony of reason and revelation, however, coupled with the stress upon correct doctrine, which led Puritan rationalism to depart from the received doctrines of tradition, and, hence, to undercut the impetus to a common program of reform. Goodwin was led to deny the doctrine of election. Biddle was led to deny the doctrine of the Trinity. The result of rationalism, that is, was not agreement and unity on the basis of reasonable doctrine, but dispute and diversity through doctrinal deviation. Puritanism had begun as an attempt to reform religious practices thought to be a block to genuine religious experience. It hoped to establish forms of worship and polity which would be conducive to its intense piety. The Puritan rationalists, notably Goodwin and Biddle, merely extended this reforming zeal to the problem of reforming the traditional doctrines themselves. In this sense they represent a logical development of the basic Puritan program of reform. The rationalists meant to purge the traditional doctrine of those elements which were not conducive to piety and godliness.

The Puritan motive in both Goodwin and Biddle is to formulate correct doctrine. Doctrine, as well as polity and worship, is in need of radical reform. The traditional doctrine, because of its corruption by the Church, is also a block to piety, and prevents men from being reconciled to God. The criterion of doctrinal reform is reason. Since human reason is able to discern, at least in blurred form, the basic structures of the universe, it follows that if doctrine is to be conducive to piety it must be consistent with human reason. Truth, to be sure, is contained completely within scripture, but it must be understood in the light of natural reason. It supplements but cannot contradict reason.

II.

Let us consider, first, the place of reason in the theology of John Goodwin, and the way it relates to his denial of predestination. The following quotation summarizes the fundamental themes of Goodwin's point of view.

. . . Christ out of the treasury of his grace and merit, furnisheth every man whatsoever, who liveth in the world to years of discretion, with a stock of

light, reason, judgement, memory, understanding . . . whereby to make him capable of those terms, of that great and blessed treaty, about the things of his eternal peace and wellbeing, wherein God addresseth himself unto the world. Now whilst men move and act according to the true ducture, and commonstrations of this light, without any palpable or wilfull deviation, or habituall neglect of them, God (in the Scripture phrase) takes a kinde of pleasure in them, blesseth and increaseth their store, according to the import of what our Saviour promiseth, and asserteth in the Gospel: viz. unto every one that hath (i. that by a regular course, and tenour of actions, declareth that he hath light given him by Christ: for a man in law, is then reputed to have a thing, when it some waies or other, appeareth, that he hath it) shall be given, and he shall have abundance (i. by means of the blessing of God upon his regular and conscientious walkings, the eye of his reason, judgement, and understanding, shall be more opened and cleered, and fortified from day to day).¹

In this statement are implied several theological propositions concerning reason and election. First, the atonement did not transfer the righteousness of Christ to men. Rather, it made men — all men — capable of seeking and understanding the Truth by which they could attain salvation if only they would. Grace is free; none are predestined either to salvation or damnation. Second, men are capable of using the reason with which they are so endowed by Christ to further their knowledge of Truth, and incur God's additional favor. Men are therefore obligated to use these abilities in the continuous search for Truth. Third, reason, since it is endowed by Christ, is a valid criterion of religious Truth, and doctrines which purport to assist men in their salvation must be subject to its judgment.

Thus we have, in integral relation with each other, the notion that reason can discern essential reality and the rejection of predestination and particular election. In place of predestination and election we find the affirmation of free will and free grace.

How does this occur? It occurs as a result of the intense piety which, in Puritanism, was originally directed against the forms of worship and the ecclesiastical organization of the Church. For Goodwin the traditional doctrines themselves must also be suitable to this piety. They must beget not "dead Faith" but "live Faith" — i. e. faith which can give a "solid account of itself, either to itself, or unto others." The test is pragmatic. The doctrine which emerges from the process of discussion and critical evaluation is the one which is most nearly correct. And therefore the traditional doctrines of the Church, as well as its worship and polity, must be reformed according to the demands of piety. A doctrine is to be rejected if it does not give rise to genuine piety, and it cannot do this if it contradicts natural reason.

The object of doctrinal reform is to generate the kind of faith which will lead men toward the light, rather than cause them to turn away from it.

A faith which is dead turns men away from God, and causes them to be cursed by Him.

. . . . But when men shall turn their backs upon that candle of the Lord . . . which by the hand of Christ is lighted up in every man's soul; especially after the light and shining of it, have been augmented and enriched by the additionall light of the Gospel; and shall follow the irregular and crooked dictates and leadings of the lusts and sinfull propensions; God now ordinarily doth not only suspend the influence of his own blessing, by which those soul-abilities we spoke of, had flourished and prospered untill now; but also in processe of his most just severity and indignation, curseth that tree of light within them, saying to it (as Christ to the fig-tree, finding no fruit on it) never fruit grow on thee more. . . .²

The reason why, that is, men turn away from moving and acting according to the light is that they live by a faith which is dead. The cause of defection

. . . . I conceive to be, the imbracing of a dead, in stead of a living Faith, of the Divine Authority and heavenly Originall, of the Scriptures. It is the saying of Quintilian, that many might in time have attained unto wisdom, had they not thought they had attained it already. In like manner it may be truly said, that many might have attained a solid and sound belief of the Scriptures, and of their Relation unto God, had they not anticipated, the belief it self, with a loose supposition, or imagination of it. . . . A dead faith makes them beleeve they are alive, even whilst they are dead in sins and trespasses. . . . Therefore by a dead Faith, I mean (with the Scriptures) such a Faith or credulity, which Solomon ascribes to the simple or foolish, Prov. 14:15. The simple beleeveeth every word, viz. that he heareth, or that is spoken to him, without any act of dijudication between word and word, without any rationall and substantiall inquiry, whether there be any competent and sufficient ground to judge that word, or saying, true, which he beleeveeth. So by a dead Faith, the Scripture (doubtlesse) meaneth such a Faith or consent unto supernaturall Truths, which is hastily, and without due consideration rais'd in the souls and which is able to give no substantiall, rationall, or solid account of it self, either to it self, or unto others.³

A dead faith — one which turns men away from God — is one which violates natural reason. A faith which stands in contradiction to natural reason is useless for the purpose of converting individuals to the Christian way. Goodwin's Puritan piety, therefore, compels him to extend reform to the very doctrines of Christianity as they have been transmitted through the Church.

Before proceeding to the reason why this desire for the reform of doctrine led to the affirmation of free will and free grace, a further quotation should serve to emphasize even more Goodwin's stress upon human reason as a source and judge of religious knowledge. In discussing the authority of Scripture, Goodwin speaks of the possibility that a "meer" man might have composed the Scriptures. Although he finally asserts that this possibility must be dismissed, because of man's lack of "disposition" to do such a thing,

Goodwin makes "by way of concession" an extremely favorable estimate of rational capacity.

... there is no question to be made, but that naturall men, by an industrious and diligent culture and improvement of their naturall endowments and abilities, may go very farre in making such discoveries, as are mentioned in the objection; and particularly may come to take hold of this conclusion, and that with cleernesse and confidence, that God is infinitely perfect, perfect above all created perfection whatsoever, from which all the rest of the particulars mentioned in the objection, seem clearly deducible, without any reluctance, or gainsaying of reason, in any of them. This the Scriptures themselves do plainly acknowledge and suppose in very many places: but most plainly, and beyond all dispute and question, Rom. 1.19,20. Because (saith the Apostle) that which may be known of God, is manifest in them (i. unto them or amongst them, speaking of naturall men,) for God hath shewed it unto them; i. . . . that which may be known of God, God hath written it in fair and legible characters in the works of creation, and withall hath given them eyes of reason and understanding sufficient to read.³

A more specific endorsement of the rational principle in the seventeenth century would be difficult to find indeed!

We have seen so far that the purpose of doctrine, as well as of worship and polity, is to induce piety, or to use another term, to induce godliness. If doctrine is to be able to perform this function it must not contradict natural reason. That it must not contradict reason is determined by the fact that reason is endowed by God in men and is capable of discerning the truth which God has written into his creation. Doctrine, therefore, should be subjected to "rationall and substantiall inquiry," and reformed to the extent that it is "able to give no substantiall, rationall, or solid account of it self."

It is this line of argument which led Goodwin to reject the doctrines of predestination and particular election.

Goodwin argues, in *A Being Filled With the Spirit*, that "it is the duty of all Christians to be filled with the Spirit." It is possible, he maintains, for individuals to do things "upon the doing whereof they shall have the Spirit of God more operative and active, more intensive, and more raised in their hearts and souls."⁵ This does not mean, to be sure, that individuals have power over the Spirit of God. It is done, therefore, not because of man's power, but because it is a part of God's promise. God behaves according to his own eternal laws, and the fact that men can accomplish the effect of being filled with the Spirit "is not the result of the means, but the proper product of that eternal law and decree which God himself hath made."⁶ This is free grace. Grace is available freely to all who would "behave themselves with all wisdom and understanding in the use of all means within the reach of their own arm, as if their design and resolution was to be filled with

the Spirit as full as possibly they could.”⁷ That this is possible is because the Holy Spirit is present in all those who have not blasphemed him. That is, the atonement could not have been only for the elect, but must have been for all men. Grace is freely available to all. In the course of saying these things, Goodwin is forced to come to terms with the doctrines of predestination and election — that the Spirit of God is not subject to law or direction, and that, in his freedom, some men are chosen to receive grace while others are refused. These doctrines, however, are contrary both to Scripture and to reason. Thus they must be rejected.

. . . Now that neither the grace of God nor the freedom of the Spirit in working is to be estimated, measured, or computed by any such notions as these, hath been already sufficiently evinced and proved. . . .⁸

Goodwin then proceeds to demonstrate how “That graciousness and freedom of working which the Scriptures anywhere, yea, and sound reason itself, asserts unto the Spirit of God, consists and shews itself . . .” Among the arguments cited is the notion that God cannot behave contrary to the laws which he has himself established.

As when God justifies and saves those that believe, he doth it freely of himself, and from himself, because he hath made this law unto himself, and established it; he hath published and declared, that ‘whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall be justified,’ and consequently ‘saved’, he doth it freely and of mere grace, not be judging himself obliged to do it by any worth or merit found in men’s believing; and yet he doth it constantly . . . , and without failing. . . . And indeed it is impossible he should do otherwise, because, as the apostle informeth us, he cannot lie, neither can he deny himself in his truth and faithfulness. In like manner the Spirit of God hath prescribed unto himself like laws and terms for all his transactions, dealings, and proceedings with men, according to the tenor whereof he will enlarge and advance his presence in the hearts and souls, and spirits of men, and will not walk contrary to them, nor advance or put forth himself in any eminency of working, but only where his lower or former motions have been obeyed and consented unto.⁹

Thus Goodwin rejects the notion of God as arbitrary will as it has been embodied in the doctrines of predestination and election. They are rejected because they cannot be reconciled with reason. They require that God behave in a way which contradicts his promise to man, and attribute to God a nature which violates his perfection as seen by natural reason. Doctrines which contradict reason give rise to “dead” faith.

III.

The rational theology of John Biddle follows a pattern similar to that of John Goodwin. Reason is upheld as having the capacity to discern essential reality. Doctrines must have the quality that they turn people toward

God, rather than away from him. To do so they must not violate reason. But whereas for Goodwin this scheme led merely to the doctrines of free grace and free will, for Biddle it led, as well, to the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. Not only does Biddle deny, along with Goodwin, predestination and arbitrary election, but he also denies the godhead of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

For Biddle, as for Goodwin, reason and scripture are complementary rather than contradictory. Christian revelation, it is said, far from opposing reason, requires that reason be employed in making its meaning clear to the people. Rationality, indeed, is commanded by scripture itself.

Nevertheless there will not be wanting some, and they such as profess themselves great Zelots in the Protestant cause, who in likelihood will stomach at the publication of this little Treatise, because Reason is therein . . . much cried up. My desire therefore is, that such persons would but consider what the holy Scripture it self saith on this behalf: Namely, how Paul, Rom. 12.1. calleth into the service which Christians are to exhibit unto God, a Rationall or Reasonable Service. And Peter, I Epist. 2.2 stileth the word of the Gospel which he preached, sincere Rationall Milk. . . . And chap. 3.15. he saith, Be ready alwayes to make an Apologie unto everyone that asketh you a Reason concerning the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. Which passage clearly intimateth, that as there is no incongruity for others to require a Reason of our hope in Christ; so we Christians are above all other Professors whatsoever, obliged to be very Rationall: For to make an Apologie or defence in the behalfe of so abstruse and sublime a Doctrine as ours is, requireth a more than ordinary improvement of Reason.¹⁰

From this it follows that the doctrines of the church should be examined and reformed according to the judgment of scripture and reason.

But if Transubstantiation is to be disclaimed because contrary to Reason, why shal not all other Unreasonable Doctrines upon the same account be exploded, especially seeing there is scarce any one of them can plead so plausible a colour of Scripture for it self as that can? As for me, my earnest request unto all Christians of what sort soever is, and shall be, that they would at length shake off all drowsiness and prejudice, and set upon a diligent & impartiall triall of all Religious Doctrines by Scripture and Reason, that so we may at length come unto the unity of the Faith, and acknowledgement of the Son of God.¹¹

The particular doctrine which, according to Biddle, is especially in need of examination and reform is that of the Trinity. Not only is it repugnant to reason and scripture, but it is also an impediment to Puritan piety. Because of the doctrine of the Trinity, which has been a corruption perpetrated by the Church, men are prevented from giving proper honor and obedience to Almighty God.

For amongst all the Corruptions in Doctrine, which certainly are many, there is none that more deserveth to be amended than this, that so palpably thwarteth the whole tenour of the Scripture, and trencheth to the very Object of our

Worship, and therefore ought not lightly to be passed over by any Man that professeth himself a Christian, much more a Reformer. God is jealous of his Honour, and will not give it to another; we, therefore, as beloved Children, should imitate our Heavenly Father herein, and not upon any pretence whatsoever depart from his express Command, and give the Worship of the supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth, to him whom the Scripture no-where affirmeth to be God. For my own particular, after a long impartial inquiry of the Truth, in this Controversy, and after much and earnest calling upon God, to give unto me the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledg of him; I find my self obliged, both by the Principles of Scripture and of Reason, to embrace the Opinion I now hold forth; and as much as in me lieth, to endeavor that the Honour of Almighty God be not transferred to another, not only to the offence of God himself, but also of his Holy Spirit, who cannot but be grieved to have that ignorantly ascribed to himself, which is proper to God that sends him, and which he nowhere challengeth to himself in the Scripture.¹²

In another section of his writings Biddle cites six particular reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity should be rejected, while expressing regret that Luther and Calvin had left behind "the gross Opinion touching three Persons in God." These reasons give substance to Biddle's contention that doctrine must conform to the precepts of human reason as well as promote genuine piety.

Which Error not only made way for those Pollutions, but lying at the bottom corrupteth almost our whole religion. For first, it introduceth three Gods, and so subverteth the Unity of God, so frequently inculcated in the Scripture. . . . Secondly, it hindreth us from praying according to the Prescript of the Gospel. For how can any Man pray to God through his Son Jesus Christ, as the Gospel directeth us to do, if God be not the Father only?

In the third place; This Tenet of three persons in God, prohibiteth us to love and honour him as we ought. For the highest Love and Honour is due to him who is the most high God. But such Love and Honour can be exhibited to no more than one Person.

In the fourth place, This Assertion of three Persons in God, thwarteth the common Notion that all men have of God. For our very Understanding suggesteth to us, that God is the same with the first Cause of all Things, he only being of himself, and all others from him.

Fifthly; This Error is the main Stumbling-block that keepeth the ancient People of God, the Jews, from entering into the Church of Christ, inasmuch as they conceive it to be the genuine Doctrine of the Christian Religion it self. For they having formerly smarted for their Idolatry, are now grown exceeding cautious of any Tenet looking that way.

Sixthly; This Doctrine prohibits the Accomplishment of that which God long since promised by the Prophet Zechariah, Chap. 14.9. In that day the Lord shall be one, and his Name one. . . .

Neither have I other aim . . . than to restore that pure and genuine Knowledg of God delivered in the Scripture, and which hath for many hundred years been hidden from the Eyes of Men by the corrupt Glosses and Traditions of Antichrist, who hath instead thereof obtruded upon them I know not what absurd and uncouth Notions, bearing them in hand that Ignorance is the

Mother of Devotion, and that they then think and speak best of God, when their Conceits and Words are most irrational and senseless. By which means, having renounced those Quiddities and strange Terms that have vitiated the simplicity of the Scripture, and having laid asleep the Contentions arising from them, we at length unanimously with one Mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹³

In this passage it is clearly stated that doctrine must be reformed according to the precepts of reason. A doctrine which is contrary to reason disrupts piety and obstructs people, notably the Jews, from turning to God through belief in Jesus Christ. If only the doctrines of the church could be purged of irrationality and senselessness then all men would unanimously "with one Mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus both Biddle and Goodwin, as Puritan rationalists, extend the reforming impetus to the problem of correct doctrine. A reform of doctrine, as well as of worship and polity, is a necessary part of the Reformation of the church. For Biddle it is the doctrine of the Trinity which most obstructs genuine piety — i. e. which most grossly stands in contradiction to reason and scripture. For Goodwin, on the other hand, it is the doctrine of arbitrary election which is in special need of reform.

It is especially enlightening to note the debate between Biddle and Goodwin concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. This debate consisted of Biddle's *XII Arguments drawn out of the Scripture: Wherein the commonly received Opinion touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit, is clearly and fully refuted*, and Goodwin's answer to these arguments in *A Being Filled With the Spirit*. The point at issue, obviously, is as to whether the Holy Spirit is truly God. Both, of course, claim that scripture supports their respective arguments. But, and this is the interesting aspect of the debate, both fall back ultimately upon reason and logical deduction as final proof.

Biddle presents his arguments in the form of two premises and a conclusion for each of the twelve arguments. The following excerpt is his first argument refuting the deity of the Holy Spirit.

He that is distinguished from God, is not God. The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God. Ergo.

The Major is evident: for if he should be both God, and distinguished from God, he would be distinguished from himself; which implies a Contradiction. The Minor is confirmed by the whole current of the Scripture, which calleth him the Spirit of God, and saith that he is sent by God, and searcheth the depths of God, &c.¹⁴

Each of the arguments is presented in this manner, deducing from self-evident premises and Scriptural texts that the Holy Spirit is not deity. Goodwin, in turn, appeals to reason and scripture, in like manner, to refute each of Biddle's arguments. Both Biddle and Goodwin affirm the same pre-

suppositions regarding the use of reason in religion. This is illustrated by the following quotation from Goodwin, in which he explicitly endorses Biddle's use of reason.

Most true it is that we ought not to believe anything in matters of religion but what we have a sufficient and substantial ground in reason why we should believe it, i. e. unless we have the word of God for it, which is the most substantial ground in reason of all others why a thing should be believed.¹⁵

But, Goodwin continues, the exact content of what it is that we should believe often remains unclear. In this case there are further rational criteria whereby it may be determined, for example, which of two conflicting doctrines should be believed. We must judge, in this case, according to the pragmatic merit of each of the doctrines in question. Goodwin describes this method of judgment as follows.

. . . I desire to try their doctrine and opinion in the point in hand, whether it be true or no, by that definition or description of the gospel which the apostle delivereth, I Tim. vi. 3, and elsewhere, calling it a doctrine unto godliness; i. e., a doctrine in every way, and in all the parts and veins of it, composed and framed for the advancement of godliness in the world, or for the making of men godly; so that every doctrine or opinion, the face whereof is set towards godliness, and which hath a tendency in it to promote the interest thereof, not contradicting or overthrowing another doctrine which hath a more express and potent tendency toward the same end, is undoubtedly a vein or branch of the gospel, and consequently from God.¹⁶

This method is then applied so as to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit and to refute Biddle's argument to the contrary.

The question is, Which opinion of the two, either that which affirmeth the Holy Ghost to be God, truly and essentially God, or that which denieth him to be so, and affirmeth him to be a creature, be of the truest and most effective calculation for the advancement of godliness in the world?

The answer to this question is Goodwin's affirmation of the deity of the Holy Spirit on the grounds that it is more effective in promoting godliness than is Biddle's denial of the same doctrine.

. . . it is a clear case that that opinion or doctrine which affirmeth the Holy Ghost, sent by God the Father abroad into the world, unto and into the hearts and consciences of men, to negotiate with them about the great business of godliness, to be truly and substantially God, equal with God the Father who sendeth him, is a doctrine of a far richer and of a more glorious tendency, hath ten times more spirit and life in it to promote and carry on the cause and interest of godliness in the world, than the contrary doctrine hath — I mean that which denieth the Holy Ghost to be God, and affirmeth him to be a creature only.¹⁷

In this debate between Goodwin and Biddle the basic features of the rational point of view within Puritanism are clearly enunciated. Doctrine, first of all, must be consistent with reason. Doctrine, secondly, must also

serve to promote godliness among men. And these two qualifications must be fulfilled simultaneously, since a doctrine which contradicts man's reason cannot possess the power necessary to induce godliness.

IV.

This paper has attempted to illustrate, through the examples of John Goodwin and John Biddle, how rational theology contributed to the transformation of Puritanism. It did this by shifting its reforming zeal from matters of worship and polity to matters of doctrine, thus undercutting its unity and power as an historical movement. Rationalism, that is, by furthering dispute and division along doctrinal lines comprised one of the disrupting influences — internal to Puritanism — which contributed to its disintegration as an historical phenomenon. The results of rational theology, in the cases of Goodwin and Biddle, were the rejection of predestination and of the Trinity respectively. Just as Puritanism could not maintain unity on the level of liturgical and ecclesiastical reform, so it could not maintain unity on the level of theological doctrine.

NOTES

For purposes of this paper, Puritanism is defined as an historical movement that arose and declined during the period between Henry VIII and the Restoration. For this definition I am indebted to Dean Jerald C. Brauer, who employed it in a class on Puritanism, and who elaborates in his article, "Reflections on the Nature of English Puritanism," *Church History*, XXIII (June, 1954).

1. John Goodwin, "The Epistle Dedicatory," *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures Asserted* (London, 1648), p. [v].

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. [vii].

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.

5. John Goodwin, *A Being Filled with the Spirit* (Edinburgh, 1867), p. 13.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

10. John Biddle, "To the Christian Reader," introd. to Samuel Stegmann, *A Brief Inquiry*, trans. John Biddle (London, 1653).
11. *Ibid.*
12. John Biddle, "A Letter written to Sir H. V. a Member of the Honourable House of Commons," 1647, *Unitarian Tracts*, I (London, 1691).
13. John Biddle, *A Confession of Faith Touching the Holy Trinity* (London, 1648), from the Preface.
14. John Biddle, *XII Arguments drawn out of the Scripture* (London, 1647), p. 1.
15. Goodwin, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

A NOTE ON GEORGE RIPLEY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF NEW ENGLAND TRANSCENDENTALISM

BY JETER A. ISELY AND ELIZABETH R. ISELY*

Among the authors whose volumes helped fill George Ripley's own library were Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle. Many of Coleridge's outbursts were obscure, part Schelling and part poetry, but Ripley admired this "magnificent confusion" and judged him "the inspired poet, the enthusiastic prophet of a spiritual philosophy." Still, Coleridge was more influential among the Calvinists than among the Unitarian radicals. Carlyle, although only by implication concerned with the nature of the religious sense and the grounds of higher knowledge, was the Scottish Gabriel for Ripley as well as for Emerson.

Ripley was so long and so deeply influenced by Carlyle that he found it difficult at times to control his emotions. On learning in 1835 from Emerson, who had established a firm friendship with the Scotsman while abroad three years earlier, that *Sartor Resartus* was eliciting no response in

* When Jeter Allen Isely, Associate Professor of History at Princeton University, died in September, 1954, he left an unfinished manuscript on the early life of George Ripley. The following fragment is taken from those parts of the 120 page manuscript which are the core of the story of Ripley's intellectual change to the transcendentalist viewpoint. The manuscript has been subjected to liberal excisions, and it is presented without footnotes as Professor Isely left it.

For his guide in drafting the manuscript, and for documentation, Jeter Isely relied chiefly upon an uncompleted but carefully documented doctoral dissertation on the life of George and Sophia Ripley by his wife, Elizabeth Riggs Isely, who died in May, 1957. Mrs. Isely began her dissertation in the early 1940's at the University of Maryland under the direction of Professor Harry R. Warfel.

This fragment, then, is the joint work of Jeter and Lizette Isely. The editor offers it with some hesitancy for two reasons. First, the piece represents, at best, only a partial first draft of Professor Isely's manuscript, to which no documentation or major editorial improvements have been added. Secondly, posthumous publication of uncompleted work can be unfair to the plans or hopes of an author. Still the essay is presented in the belief that some consideration of this phase of George Ripley's life, where more must one day be done, will be a service to those who are occupied with the development of the New England mind.

— Wilson Smith, The Johns Hopkins University, for The Princeton University History Department.

England, Ripley was deeply moved. He wrote Carlyle an unsolicited and, to use Emerson's words, "a most reverential letter":

I have communed with your spirit in the utterance of its deep wisdom, and when I have felt the significance of your mystic sayings, my heart has leaped up with the response, "This unknown Being is my Brother." . . . Several years since with only a prophetic sense of the untold treasures of German thought, I read your article on German literature in the *Edinburgh Review*. I was then a babe in this kind of knowledge, but felt at once the strongest sympathy with your views. The cares of life, and its urgent duties, prevented me at that time from studying this department with due diligence. . . . England, my Brother! fellow spirit of the eternal, — has for now more than one century, been hemmed in with the Finite, girt around with the brazen walls of Custom. She has no sense & no soul for the voice of the Infinite, which is sounding forth from this vocal Universe. Your ear has turned itself to catch the Echoes, which come from beyond the shores of Time. . . .

At first Carlyle got no comfort from Ripley's letter: "it seemed so overdone." But soon the substance (and possibly the friendly proffer of aid from abroad) obscured the form, and the two men established a warm communication across the Atlantic, sometimes by personal correspondence but more often through exchanges relayed by mutual friends, and especially by Emerson.

Yet the real significance of the letter is the indication of how far Ripley had moved away from the historicity of Andrews Norton and the conservative Unitarians who believed only what was impressed on the senses. This development had been motivated by Ripley's incessant search for religious knowledge, by his concern for the socially maladjusted individual, and by his desire for a vigorous American literary expression.

One phase of Ripley's career was completed. Never again after his first year at divinity school did he return to the pristine paradise of his earlier Trinitarian days, where God (Triune) walked under the Tree of Life, and the Serpent had a Socinian face. Nor did he have any desire to return. For the rest of his life, he plodded in the opposite direction, amid gigantic and shrouded truths, in search of a Supernatural quality which would clarify the mind, elevate the masses, and allow a nation to speak in clear and beautiful resonance. He sought no controversy, but only to touch and quicken the understanding with an intuitive perception of the divine. Religious certainty, together with the literal truth of the Bible, joined his childhood belief in the enduring substantiality of the crocus, the fern, the yellow leaf, and the snowflake.

From the outset of his ministry, Ripley experienced doubts, not as to the existence of God, but as to the proper faith. These stimulated his reading, which introduced new uncertainties. He was in a vicious circle, but

one most conducive to learning. Perturbed as he was about the nature of the soul and the intuitive knowledge of truth, the more he read to find solutions, the more he speculated.

It was as a "sincere Christian" that Ripley gradually built up an eclectic philosophy opposed to the empiricism of John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume. Ripley, worried by the skepticism which, to him, the empirical system logically upheld, sought a way out through the medium of German and French philosophers, and by reading such Britishers as Coleridge and Carlyle. The journey was tortuous, but the European Transcendental thinkers put him on a path that seemed secure.

Ripley could not have been satisfied with Kant, and his study of other German philosophers took him through a welter of arguments and counter arguments. Kant's disciple, Friedrich Jacobi, rebelled at his master's scepticism, and elaborated an intuitive philosophy which held that the subjective ideas of the reason implied objective reality. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, on the other hand, was a follower of Kant and denied the possibility of knowing any world outside the mind. Friedrich von Schelling began as a disciple of Fichte, and then took a wide departure, concluding that the external world and mind existed in the universal soul and that man's consciousness and his object of thought were united by intuition. Of them all, the religious writer Friedrich Schleiermacher most appealed to Ripley. Schleiermacher was a follower of Jacobi, and reached the position that the soul's sense of the divine, rather than dogma or historical record, was the essence of Christianity. The religious sense belonged by nature to man.

The results of Ripley's inquiries were not universally applauded in Boston. In fact, the philosophy that he and his friends developed separated the Unitarian divines and sent the more conservative to the public press in sharp anger. Boston was amazed that men of God should so comport themselves, and the Calvinist Trinitarians from their ramparts in Princeton and Andover scoffed that this was the inevitable consequence of Socinianism.

The battle was slow in developing, and one explanation was the inherent conservatism in Ripley's character. His mind was radically inclined, and his convictions, when adopted, were rigidly held; but he was not only determined to keep his pulpit above controversy, he was also anxious to avoid a breach in the Unitarian ranks — he wanted to develop his new philosophy and to modify the strict empiricism of Andrews Norton and other conservative Unitarians, and nothing more. It was Norton who became irked and unleashed the first broadside. The initial volley was in many ways unfair, and, especially since it attempted to deny to the radical Unitarians the freedom of inquiry after religious truth and the open expression of their findings, Ripley had no choice but to cry out in reply.

The radicals answered, moderately at first, but there was suppressed rage. As early as 1832, four years before the battle was openly joined, Sophia Ripley privately scorning a recent conservative pot-shot against subversive ideas from abroad, spoke of "*the wicked Mr. Norton.*"

George and Sophia avoided such outbursts when beyond their close family circle, and he, of course, never used his pulpit in the impending verbal conflict. The arena was rather the religious and the secular press.

II.

Ripley's early association with the press was innocuous enough for the conservative Unitarians, but increasingly he grew more bold in expression. His first semi-official journalistic venture in his capacity as a Unitarian minister was a brief co-editorship of the *Christian Register*.

In general, the articles in the *Register* were not signed. Sometimes they were initialed, as were Brownson's. Ripley, on the other hand, preferred protective coloring and never left a mark of identification. This anonymity he carried with him into his co-editorship of the *Boston Observer*, which spent six months of 1835 extolling virtue and then was absorbed by the *Register*.

Why Ripley helped launch the *Observer* in a field already occupied by the *Register* is not exactly clear. As has been seen, there were no personal animosities (something Ripley eschewed throughout life); but he was undoubtedly attracted by editorial work and with a few brief interruptions would follow it during the remainder of his career. Indications are that he felt himself hamstrung on the *Register*, and, becoming more and more radical in his own views, wished to use the new organ in order to force the old into a position nearer his own tastes.

While advocating holy calm, the *Observer* risked undermining that emotion in the older Unitarians. One editorial was especially notable in view of the impending controversy with Andrews Norton. The *Observer* warned that the cohesive ingredient of the Unitarian party was

freedom, respect for private judgment, and recognition of the right and duty of liberal inquiry. We are bound together, not by an entire unity of faith, which we suppose never existed in half a dozen minds which thought independently, but by a harmony of feeling, a common desire to promote those great truths, which are held by all Christians, and on disputed points, to preserve every one's personal independence to the fullest extent.

Ripley and his co-editor were treading near the toes of the elder Unitarians who were forming a creed of religious beliefs which they would retain as sound; but the young ministers stepped back by declining to separate

the truths which were considered to be universal from the points which were disputed.

Six months after the opening number, appeared the farewell address "To Our Readers." Although in terms of subscribers the *Observer* was said to be thriving beyond all hopes, the *Register* had meanwhile improved. Since the sole object of the editors had been "to give the public a Unitarian paper worthy of the cause," they were cheerfully allowing their journal to be absorbed by the *Register*. Thus the *Observer* passed out of existence, having been a vehicle reconnoitring the way toward a Transcendental religious faith: "If our hearts could be read by the eye of man, it would be found that no deeper convictions are written thereon, than that pure Christianity is eternal, absolute Truth — a direct emanation from the Divine Mind."

It was, however, Ripley's contributions to the *Christian Examiner*, the Unitarian monthly, which aroused the conservative Unitarians and provoked the mighty Andrews Norton to public wrath. Ripley later claimed ten articles in the *Examiner* between the years 1830 and 1837.

Collectively, these articles picture Ripley's beliefs. He has faith in the existence of God, and he trusts in the presence of a sensible, eternal world around him; but not all knowledge comes through the senses. There remains the knowledge that is innate to the soul, where the power of reason communes with truth in the divine mind. Reason is not itself the divine mind; nor is it an Inner Light. It is the crowning human faculty, and is natural to the mind, but it is not invincible. It requires cultivation. The pressure of outward circumstances accelerates, hinders, or determines the direction of this culture as the case may be; but reason never lies. In some souls, it burns with the beautiful white flame of gunpowder; in others, it seems extinguished; but whether dim or brilliant, it shows the truths which are unchanging. Christianity, in short, is recognized by reason as the highest expression of moral and religious truth. Compared to this testimony, historicity and miracles are unimportant.

Ripley's first concern, in point of time, was with the techniques of education and the effect of knowledge on the Christian faith. Two papers in the *Christian Examiner* were on the Swiss educators Joseph de Gérando and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. These men were unshackling the soul by urging progressive methods of self-expression, which gave the school-child a firm foundation for Christianity in his own heart. With such training, Ripley was sure in a third article, a repetition of the infidelity that had so recently swept France would be impossible, since the ideal religion was unafraid of science and was non-authoritarian. It appealed to the head and the heart; it combined the love of God and of mankind.

The remaining seven articles dealt directly with literature and with the philosophy of religion. The occasion of Charles Follen's inaugural at Harvard was seized upon to defend the German Transcendental school. These philosophers seemed obscure because they were seeking to define sublime truth, but it was not necessary for all to study them since "strong instinct . . . leads every creature of God to its appropriate aliment."

In a review article of Sir James MacIntosh's *General View of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, Ripley upheld Professor Levi Frisbie and the distaste of the Unitarians for the Utilitarians. MacIntosh had failed to distinguish sufficiently the ideas of right and of utility. The idea of right, Ripley reasoned, is simple and intuitive, and hence far superior to the idea of utility.

Two of the papers were on Herder. Ripley attributed to Herder the belief that the very essence of Protestantism is conviction, individual examination, and independence. For the old Protestant ideal of private judgment, Ripley was invariably willing to wage war, and this was one of his stronger attachments to Herder. Herder's Biblical views were also attractive: the poetry of the Bible should not be translated into scientific prose; the story of the Creation in Genesis, for example, is but the fragment of an Oriental song; prophecies were the utterances of national hopes and wishes, not literal predictions of the future; revelation comes to every age, but was richest in Biblical times; and miracles were not proof of the divinity of Christ's mission: that proof could be found only in the depth of the human soul.

A group of "Theological Aphorisms" and an article on Schleiermacher throw further light on Ripley's thinking and reveal a firm historical determinism. Ripley does not deny the existence of an external world, nor the pressure of that world on man's conscience. Time, to a large extent, determines what great men should be. Given the time, it is almost predictable that there should be a great religious thinker like Schleiermacher, who holds a position rather like Ripley's own, belonging to both the Rationalists and the Supernaturalists. "He holds with perfect faith," writes Ripley of Schleiermacher, "to the supernatural character, the miracles, and the divine mission of Jesus Christ; and at the same time he would reinstate the authority of reason, and establish the claims of religion in harmony with those of a sound philosophy." The essential character of religion is, according to Schleiermacher, "neither knowledge nor action, but a sense of our dependence on God, and of our need of redemption from sin. The seat of this feeling is the primitive consciousness of human nature." Christian principles are those that have always prevailed in the church, but these are hard to ascertain. Basic is a dependence on God. While Ripley is overwhelmed

with no discernible sense of sin, his reliance on God is acute, and vibrates sympathetically not only to the German theologian, but to the feelings and expressions of the backward, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. This gives Ripley, along with Schleiermacher and Herder, the conviction of belonging to society as a unit. All men, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, know God and together commune with God. This is "the primitive consciousness of human nature."

It was the mystical quality in Ripley's thinking that brought dissension to the ranks of Boston's Unitarians. Ripley's most important article in the *Examiner* was a review of *The Rationale of Religious Enquiry* by the English Unitarian, James Martineau. Here Ripley openly stated what he had many times previously hinted, on occasion rather strongly, that belief in the miracles of Christ was not basic to faith in God. Ripley did believe in these miracles, but he placed the intuitive and instinctive sensitivity of the human soul to God's divinity as the *sine qua non* of Christianity. The miracles were secondary, a manifestation of divine power, not proof of that power.

Martineau sought to put theology on the same plane as the other sciences, and this Ripley could not allow. For the Englishman to achieve his end, it was necessary to draw a line between theology and mythology. The materials for the study of theology were the books of the New Testament, the traditions of the Catholic Church, the creeds of Protestantism, and the decisions of reason in the province of natural religion and in the history of civilization. The only proof of the plenary inspiration of the New Testament, Martineau declared, would be a supernatural audible voice. There was no such voice and no such proof. Evidence was lacking to concede infallibility to either Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. The only criterion for judging true religion, the English theologian continued, was reason. Careful scholarship should decide what was Biblical, and the absurd should be rejected. Between revealed religion, or the ideas of God derived from the miraculous events of the Bible, and natural religion, or all ideas of God otherwise derived, there was no opposition. Martineau argued that the results of Christianity in civilization could only be decided by standards of permanence and universality. By such tests, it seemed to him that the result of Christianity in civilization was such universal sentiments as the natural equality of men, not in an economic, political, or metaphysical sense, but in the religious sense that all are children of one Father, and appointed to one life eternal.

Ripley quarrelled with Martineau's view that the sacred writers were not supernaturally inspired. He defined natural inspiration as "the power of the soul by which it gains the intuitive perception of spiritual truth,"

which was an inspiration common to all men. When perception of spiritual truth transcended the ordinary, supernatural inspiration occurred. "This," affirmed Ripley, "we believe can be asserted of our Savior, without any limitation. His soul was a sea of light. All that was human in the Son of the Virgin, all that belonged to his personality as a Jewish teacher, all that marks the secondary, derived, and fallible in the nature of man, as distinguished from the primitive, the original, the infallible, the divine, was swallowed up, and, as it were annihilated, in the fullness of the Spirit which dwelt in him, in those kingly ideas of Truth and Good, which sustain the authority of the Eternal Throne, and authenticated the man of Nazareth as the Son of God. . . ."

Such inspiration, Ripley continued, was to be judged by its agreement with the primitive and universal dictates of the absolute reason in man. Only in this manner could it be distinguished from superstition and enthusiasm. But at the same time, the natural inspiration of the many must sit in judgment of the supernatural inspiration which is imparted to a few. The Apostles were supernaturally inspired but not infallible. Their inspiration, being addressed to the soul, was a higher witness than their miracles or than the miracles of Christ, all of which were addressed to the senses.

Ripley's review of Martineau's study, appearing in November, 1836, was too much for Andrews Norton. He wrote a hot letter of rebuttal to the *Christian Register*; but the editor, James Walker, was a calm and ordained minister (Norton at this moment was neither) as well as a friend of Ripley's, and Norton got his letter back.

The full extent of Norton's pent-up wrath may be seen in the fact that he readdressed his letter to the secular Boston *Daily Advertiser*. This, from a man who had long maintained that free inquiry and a liberal expression of views were the basic characteristics of the Unitarian family, was like calling on mob violence to execute one's own son. But Norton and the conservative Unitarians really had no choice. Already for more than a decade, they had been under attack from the Trinitarians, who were maintaining that there was an inherent tendency toward infidelity in Unitarianism. Now it seemed that Ripley and the other followers of the German school in Boston would prove the Trinitarians right. Norton was on the horns of a dilemma. If he could not shut up these Transcendentalists, at least he must shake them clear of the Unitarian frock.

Norton implied (he later made this charge shorn of all qualification) that Ripley and all his colleagues at home and abroad were infidels. This, in the Boston of the time, was a grave accusation, and for a leader in the Unitarian group to level it in the public press at a respected minister of his denomination, one of his former students, was indeed a serious thing. Nor-

ton, a Harvard graduate and a Harvard professor, schooled in decorum and good manners, felt so desperately that the foundation of his faith was being undermined by a bunch of young renegades recently fallen under the spell of an unAmerican mysticism, that he was goaded beyond endurance.

He informed the world that he had been pained by the article in the *Examiner*. Since he and other gentlemen of very correct opinions on religious subjects had written for that scholarly journal, someone might think that they were in some way responsible for the views expressed in the critique of Martineau's *Rationale*. Norton denied emphatically any such responsibility. Further, the expression of such views might have dangerous effects on persons reading them, and for this reason, their circulation should be confined to theologians who could judge them. Any idea of the superiority of intuitive approval as a criterion of truth over the witness of historically supported miracles was subversive. "I have no wish to interfere with the rights of free discussion," said Norton in a fine peroration, but it should not take place in the *Christian Examiner*.

Ripley was taken by surprise, although certain of his friends had seen the storm brewing and knew from what quarter of the compass it was coming. When he recovered from his first shock, he executed a series of maneuvers which were both adroit and belligerent. He sent a brief answer to the *Advertiser*, and a short, touching note to the editor of the *Register*, thanking him for his personal consideration but stating that he, Ripley, believed in free discussion. So, would the *Register* print Norton's letter and his own reply? The last mentioned communication was said to be couched in "the spirit of candor and charity." It called attention to the teacher's superiority in years and attainments, but suggested that Norton was heretical, officious, unjust, Pharisaical, inquisitorial, immoderate, and unenlightened. Then in gentle tones, it invited the professor out to do battle. For Norton's benefit, Ripley thoughtfully appended a list of citations to illustrate the superiority of belief from intuitive corroboration to that from the evidence of miracles.

From the dead silence in the direction of Cambridge, we suspect that Norton either repented his outburst momentarily or did not think highly enough of Ripley's challenge to answer. But Ripley could not resist a second invitation. Later, in 1836, he published a group of sermons delivered two years before, and in the preface took a slap at Norton, without mentioning him by name. "The word Reason is used here," said Ripley, "not as the power of reasoning, of evolving derivative truth from admitted premises, but in its highest philosophical sense as a faculty of perceiving primitive, spiritual truth." He offered his opponent no quarter: "The decisions of Reason, which may be regarded as the very essence of the soul, compel us

to admit the existence of God, as the ground of our own existence, of an Infinite Being, as the first cause of the finite nature, of an invisible spirit, as the origin and support of the visible universe. Deny this idea, who can — he cannot wholly deny his own Reason, — and though he may endeavor to cast it from him, it will again return, its voice will make itself heard, announcing the presence of the Almighty, and he cannot reject the convictions it brings.”

It is unlikely that Ripley’s congregation was fully aware of what some Unitarian leaders deemed a heretical bias. At least his flock was undisturbed. And if these prefatory remarks were heresy, the *Christian Examiner* either missed them or was anxious to restore calm to Unitarian ranks, or Ripley had a friend as reviewer who praised the sermons as tending “to introduce a higher tone of spirituality into Unitarian preaching.” Norton, on the other hand, could hardly have failed to get the point, although several years passed before he again gave tongue in public.

III.

In general the younger group of Transcendentalists were known to each other. They attended the same gatherings, such as the club of Jonathan Phillips in the Tremont House. Most of them were Unitarian ministers and attended the same church celebrations. They listened to each other preach, read one another’s articles in the same journals, and ransacked world literature for new views of the soul’s powers. They pored over the writings of German theologians. They burrowed in libraries, scrutinized foreign journals, wandered into the bookshops, and bought imported volumes from under one another’s nose — while Ripley contemplated the purchase of fifteen volumes of Goethe, Emerson ordered them loaded onto the Concord stage. In 1836, the forming of the Transcendental Club made them a conscious group, instead of a number of brilliant, allied individuals.

One September afternoon, Ripley, Emerson, George Putnam, and Frederic Henry Hedge strolled up to the Willard House from the bicentennial celebration of the founding of Harvard. The talk of the young ministers drifted to the narrow limits of thought within the churches. Time passed quickly, and they felt sorry about breaking off the discussion. One of the four suggested that they meet again from time to time for serious conversation, and bring others with them. Ripley offered his house for the next meeting; and accordingly there they gathered on September 19, with Bronson Alcott, Convers Francis, and James Freeman Clarke also in attendance. This meeting was for business. On October 3, they collected at Alcott’s for conversation.

Since intuition was personal with each of these individuals, there were as many types of Transcendentalism as there were Transcendentalists; and Ripley's principal contribution to the group was as a moderator and harmonizer. In this role he was assisted by certain basic similarities. The Transcendentalists all had their starting point in the same psychological belief. They all opposed slavery, studied German diligently, and cherished the idea that Carlyle was their big English brother of the soul. They urged him to join them in Boston, and sent him their writings, with which he tried hard to keep abreast.

Still, differences of opinion outweighed similarities at meetings of the Transcendentalist group. Ripley, like the others, declined to echo anybody, and held his own in the conversations; indeed Theodore Parker described an exchange between Ripley and Channing as equalling one of Plato's beautiful dialogues. But the semblance of cohesion possessed by the Transcendentalists was best exemplified in Ripley. He was ever reasonable and calm, understanding and tolerant; and his warm, friendly personality, especially in so restricted a circle, was a magnet to men and women of divergent views. He was a close friend of such forthright and in many ways opposite characters as Parker and Emerson. Ripley responded sympathetically to the social consciousness of Orestes Brownson and to the reclusion of Henry David Thoreau. When differing with an associate, as for example when siding with Channing in taking exception to the impersonality of Emerson's concept of God, Ripley did so gracefully and cordially, thus going far in imparting to the group a prevailing spirit of reverent and sympathetic disagreement. Moreover, once formed, Ripley's friendships were strong. Brownson, for example, who was after all not a Harvard man, was too energetic (or if one prefers too ill-mannered) in his conversation to suit most of the other Transcendentalists, and they soon ceased inviting him to their meetings. But his friendship with Ripley remained firm. Although the paths of the two men soon turned poles apart, Brownson continued to speak kindly of Ripley. "I owe more to him than to any other man among the Protestants," Brownson the Catholic convert wrote years later; "I loved him as I have loved no other man, and shall so love him and esteem him as long as I live."

FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY JURGEN HERBST

Wesleyan University

The bibliography here presented comprises a listing of approximately 180 titles of books, articles, essays, pamphlets, and sermons for which the authorship of Francis G. Peabody, from 1886 to 1913 Plummer Professor of Christian Morals in the Harvard Divinity School, could be established without doubt. Every item listed in the bibliography is available in one or several of the libraries of Greater Boston. These include, in particular, the Library and Archives of Harvard College and of its Divinity School, the Boston Public Library, the Unitarian Historical Library, and the Congregational Library. An earlier but limited bibliography by Robert H. Holmes, which appeared as part of his B. D. dissertation on "Francis Greenwood Peabody and his Role in the Social Interpretation of Christianity" (Meadville Theological School, Chicago, 1945), has been incorporated into the present list.

Given the nature of Peabody's writings, the custom of separate publication of individual sermons, and the diversity of religious tracts, newspapers, and pamphlets printed throughout the United States, it is manifestly impossible to vouch for the completeness of this bibliography. The author regrets that he has not been able to search through all the files of the *Christian Register*. Undoubtedly, such investigation would add further titles to the list.

The author wishes to express his appreciation for the patience shown by the librarians of the Harvard Archives in fulfilling his requests. A special word of gratitude is due Mrs. Martha S. C. Wilson at the Unitarian Historical Library for her enthusiasm in joining the search for Peabodiana.

1869

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EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor:

Mr. Herbert E. Hudson in his "Recent Interpretations of Parker" [*The Proceedings*, Volume XIII, Part I, 1960] takes issue with my conclusions about the radical leader in *The Transcendentalist Ministers*. I am sure my book has many faults, and certainly I should be disappointed if it did not provoke discussion. But I must record my protest against the methods of Mr. Hudson's attempted critique.

In the three pages in which Hudson deals with my study of the Parker controversy, and in the footnotes which go with them, I find seventeen instances of misquotation, incorrect attribution, undocumented assertion, or improper citation. If one were to count wrong dates, minor misquotations, errors of logic, irrelevancies, and quibbles, the number would be rather higher.

Some of Mr. Hudson's misrepresentations are so extreme that even his failure to check his work seems insufficient to explain them. To cite an example: By way of demonstrating my alleged habit of stressing the bad and suppressing the good about Parker, Hudson declares that Hutchison's "one reference to the *Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion* is Parker's use of Alexander Pope's poem." The fact is that there are twelve separate references to the *Discourse*, ten of them in the chapter Hudson is discussing. Six of the references involve direct quotation. One of the quotations is seven lines long. Another quotation is twenty-one lines long.

Mr. Hudson asserts that I called Parker's opinion of Christianity "vulgar and absurd." I neither implied nor expressed nor in any way held such an opinion. What I wrote (p. 109) was that Parker called certain tenets of the popular faith vulgar and absurd.

Mr. Hudson represents me as believing Parker stood for a "foreign" and "pernicious" element in the Church. His footnote, despite a string of numbers, does not indicate where I used those terms. I did not use them. (Where the word "foreign" may have occurred as an epithet I do not know. It is true, however, that on page 125, a page not cited by Hudson, I said that Orville Dewey said that some Unitarians thought Parker's doctrines "pernicious.")

I did not speak of Parker's undue "tenderness and hurt feelings"; Dewey did. I did not say that the names Parker called others were as unjust as those he was called; the Rev. John Morison did. And I did not "insist" that Parker's feeling of persecution "was without justification." No one did.

Where Mr. Hudson found me approving, directly or by implication, remarks like those of Dewey and Morison — or of Emerson and Parker — he had every right to say so, and to make as much of it as he might care to. But to lead your readers to think that I stated any judgments other than precisely those which I did state is quite a different matter.

Mr. Hudson parlays his carelessness into conclusions which would be devastating if they could be supported. One such conclusion is that, since Hutchison "is content to rely upon second hand reports of Parker by conservatives, . . . his interpretation is to

be trusted no more fully than past efforts by extreme partisans." This conclusion rests upon the assertion that "the substance of Hutchison's chapter is occupied by the decidedly conservative opinions" of Lothrop, Gannett, Osgood, Peabody, Morison, and Dewey, "which are permitted to represent Parker."

Neither the six critics mentioned, nor any other spokesmen, are even remotely "permitted to represent Parker." Parker's opinions, drawn from both his controversial and his other writings, occupy the first one-fourth of the chapter in question. I isolated this exposition in an opening section because I thought fuller justice could be done Parker's views there than would be possible in the later blow-by-blow description of a heated controversy.

Even without those opening nine pages, however, Parker is still represented at first hand more than any of Mr. Hudson's conservatives. Those six overweening gentlemen, in fact, have a total of exactly 12½ paragraphs in which to "occupy the substance" of this thirty-six-page chapter. (Parker is also discussed or mentioned on thirty-four other pages of the book, including an eleven-page section which Hudson declined to take into account even though it bears upon the question of Parker's "personality.")

I have had to respond somewhat strongly to a critic who, whether he meant to or not, accused me of rather serious scholarly irresponsibility. But I would not like to leave your readers with the impression that I think Parker comes off as well in my book as he would in a biography. He does not.

But this was not a volume, or even a chapter, "about Parker." It was about the relations between Transcendentalism and Unitarianism. And I found, just as the Rev. Mr. Scovel apparently found in his more intensive research on Parker's character (*Proceedings*, 1960), that Parker as a personality was not at his best in the Transcendentalist controversy. It seemed to me, in fact, that the whole episode brought out the worst in him, just as it did in other fiery characters like Andrews Norton.

There is, in any case, a built-in selectivity in the process of writing about men in such exigent situations. And an author's enthusiasm for his primary conclusions can most assuredly compound the risk of distortion. On several occasions, therefore, I warned readers of *The Transcendentalist Ministers* that they were inevitably being exposed to the more unlovely utterances of Norton, Parker, and others — to the utterances which made people angry. After quoting from the debated passages of the "Transient and Permanent," for example, I wrote as follows:

Parker's sermon, like nearly all of his controversial works, also contained positive elements — appreciations of the excellence of Christ and the truths of the Bible, eloquent and lofty appeals to man's spiritual nature. Such affirmations in Parker's writings should not go unrecognized, since they formed the bulk of his noncontroversial preaching and unquestionably accounted for much of his popular influence. Some of Parker's opponents of 1841 can be criticized for ignoring this more constructive side of his doctrine, although the severity of the preacher's negative utterances made it natural that discussion should center in that area. (pp. 109-10)

I confess this seemed clear enough to me, and still does. But even if it was inadequate, Mr. Hudson, who quoted so much, might have quoted a line or two from it.

Finally, I feel obliged to comment upon Mr. Hudson's reference to my alleged "working from the assumptions of the Christian Church." This undocumented inference,

set down as though it were a statement of fact, exposes a prime weakness, I think, in Mr. Hudson's understanding of nineteenth-century Unitarianism.

He appears to have made such a statement because I dealt with the clerical Transcendentalists "as Christian ministers." I can only suggest in reply that Mr. Hudson ought to do some re-reading in Transcendentalist religious thought, beginning with a sermon called "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity."

The Transcendentalist ministers were significant for the liberal Christianity which they professed as well as for the later non-Christian humanism which they helped inspire. (For the latter, see chapter 6, *The Transcendentalist Ministers*.) The propriety of dealing with them in each of these contexts would be an assumption, I should think, not of any "church" but of a sound historical procedure.

WILLIAM R. HUTCHISON

Princeton, New Jersey
January 12, 1961

BOOK REVIEWS

Theodore Parker: An Anthology. Edited, with an introduction and notes, by HENRY STEELE COMMAGER. Boston: Beacon Press, 1960. 391 pages. \$6.00.

Fifty years ago the Centenary Committee for Parker published a fifteen volume edition of Parker's works. One member of the committee bemoaned the size of the publication venture, for he feared that the abundance of material would discourage those who would seek to know the mind of Parker. Better a one volume selection than a fifteen volume collection, he thought. Happily the committee did back the publication of the fifteen volumes by the American Unitarian Association. And this collection had a fine index to the fifteen volumes. Nevertheless the need for a one volume collection has not been met until the publication of the Commager selection from the more complete works. This volume is a fine and fitting tribute to the Great American Preacher, one of Unitarianism's greatest men.

The book makes a first rate supplement to Commager's biography of Parker; it provides, in Parker's own words, the first hand evidence for the interpretation Commager gives of his character. Here we have selections from Parker's sermons, articles, poems, essays, addresses, and letters. I find lacking only the prayers, for none are given here, and the great address on "The Rights of Man in America," in which Parker gave his definition of American democracy. Happily the work which Dr. Holmes described to me as the greatest autobiographical writing he had ever read, the "Experience as a Minister," is reprinted virtually in full. It is to be regretted that the publisher did not reprint the work *in toto*. About ten paragraphs were deleted, "because they seemed to be duplicated in Parker's writings elsewhere in this anthology." In checking it over carefully, I found the deletions trivial.

The Theodore Parker Memorial Committee shares with the editor the hope "that the current interest in Parker will inspire a new comprehensive edition of his writings." We especially hope for a publication of Parker's journals, to date unpublished. Also we profoundly hope, with Dr. Commager, that this anthology "will make familiar to a new generation the thought and character of that great crusader for righteousness who may still claim to be The Great American Preacher."

The publishers have, none the less, much to answer for in the preparation of this book for printing. They have permitted it to be printed lacking a subject index. They might have learned from the melancholy history of the *Channing Day by Day*, which had a quantity of excellent material so arranged that one couldn't find anything in it on any specific subject, since it has no index. They have done it again! It is inexcusable, and they should be hanged by their toes until they are thoroughly repentant and resolve never again to treat our 'saints' in such a shabby fashion, to give them to us unindexed. With an index, the volume would be worth every cent of the \$6.00. Without it, it is questionable just how much use it will receive from ministers seeking just the right word from Parker for a reading. Maybe they will read the whole book through. That might not be a bad idea, at that.

JOHN WALLACE LAWS

The Universalist Church
Waterville, Maine

Hosea Ballou: The Challenge to Orthodoxy. By ERNEST CASSARA. Boston: Beacon Press and the Universalist Historical Society, 1961. 226 pages. \$4.95.

This book takes us back to the beginnings of liberal religion in America. In the portrayal of the life and ministry of Hosea Ballou, Dr. Cassara affords the reader the opportunity of entering into the great debate between the exponents of eternal damnation and those of universal salvation. In this controversy many of the well known figures of that era find their place: John Murray, Elhanan Winchester, William Ellery Channing, Thomas Whittemore, Abner Kneeland, and others all of whom make this book a scholarly and interesting document. The many characters are in constant conflict. Sermon excerpts, letters, and Biblical quotations abound. All are easily referred to in an excellent index and bibliography.

The student of religion can hammer out his own theology along with the early Universalists.

The active minister may find still relevant sermon material, and chuckle as he recognizes that the trials and tribulations of the minister of that era are not too unlike those he encounters today.

The lay reader will enjoy the occasional satire, and the tender portrayal of the family life of Hosea Ballou.

Every reader will profit by this rediscovery of the roots of American Universalism.

PHILIP M. LARSON

*First Parish, Unitarian Church
Chelmsford, Mass.*

The Epic of Unitarianism: Original Writings from the History of Liberal Religion. Edited by DAVID B. PARKE. Boston: Beacon Press, 1960. 157 pages. \$1.45. (LR 6)

Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing, Emerson, Parker. Introduction by CONRAD WRIGHT. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961. 152 pages. \$1.25. (LR 12)

"History is important for an understanding of the present . . . and it is best told in the original words of those who made it." So says David B. Parke and sets about to prove it by assembling and editing a variety of Unitarian documents: treatises, sermons, manifestoes, letters, and speeches on subjects ranging from an apology for theological orthodoxy (novel for its inclusion in a documentary history of Unitarianism) to a defense of sociological un-orthodoxy (novel in that it represents a reply to a Unitarian inspired and promoted "heresy charge" against one of its own). Although Mr. Parke evidences a marked degree of literary ability and a high calibre of scholarship, he is severely limited by the lack of space in which to develop his point of view. It should be obvious to any reader of this journal that a religious movement of such proportions as Unitarianism

cannot be documented with anything resembling accuracy in snippets and snatches, no matter how much literary skill the author demonstrates in weaving them into a whole fabric. Because what Mr. Parke does with his material he does well, the fault lies, in this reviewer's opinion not with the author, but with the publisher for shortsightedness as to what should have been a large, important book.

The author's approach to his subject might best be described as "history by century." We question this approach on two counts: first, it leads the reader away from the realization that historical events flow, regardless of temporal designation and that they often gain in their significance over the passage of years (for example, the work of Servetus; regarded in its time as the work of an eccentric, its theological significance disregarded until the nineteenth century); second, such an approach over-simplifies what is essentially a complex structuring such as any institutional development undergoes.

Another drawback in the construction of the book is the illusion created by the documents themselves. From them one receives the impression of flashing individual personalities that rise like rockets at intervals over the past four hundred years. The inter-connecting comment between the documents supplies the "effects of the fall-out" upon an unknown group who, like the children of Israel, wander from Italy to Poland to England, the Netherlands and America. There is little connection between this series of "Moses-types" (represented by the documents) and the communities of "Unitarians" upon which their wisdom was being showered. This impression of Unitarian history leads one to the conclusion that Unitarianism's "freedom to commitment" should be extended to read "freedom to commitment to some current personality." While Mr. Parke does take cognizance of this problem (using the analogy of planting and plucking what has been planted), at no point in his inter-connecting material are we able to determine who "plants" and who "plucks."

The Epic of Unitarianism is of value in that it does present a collection of major documents of Unitarianism. It deserves a place in the church library and in the hands of the adult discussion group. The book represents an attempt in a direction which has long needed attention and is fine introductory and supplementary material for the works of Wilbur, McLachlan and Conrad Wright. However, if an edition of extended length were to be undertaken, certain documentary evidence might be presented in a number of instances and in answer to a number of questions. The *Opera* of Frycz Modrzewski (Modrevius), the key Roman Catholic figure at the center of the religious ferment in the Sixteenth Century who had relations with the Polish Brethren, might be included as well as some of the work of James Acontius, Bernard Ochino, Gribaldi and Blandrata. Some portion of the Laudian Canon of 1640 (condemning the heresy of Socinianism in England), plus the writing of Paul Best and John Webberly might help to sharpen the focus in our own minds of the work of our esteemed heretical ancestors.

In *Three Prophets*, the three most familiar, far reaching, and theologically significant addresses in the history of American Unitarianism are assembled in their entirety. Such a book should be part of every Unitarian's library for no other reason than that it contains "Unitarian Christianity" (Channing), "The Divinity School Address" (Emerson), and "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" (Parker). However, there is a fourth reason for reading and owning this volume: the 43-page introduction by Dr. Conrad Wright. With clarity and precision, the same qualities which mark *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America*, Dr. Wright spells out the significance of each of the addresses; what they meant to Unitarians and to non-Unitarians of the times in which they were delivered, what they mean in relationship to each other, what they mean for us today as theological and social milestones in our history. The introduction goes yet further in

describing how the times of their preachment are crystalized in each, each being a microcosm by means of which the social and theological macrocosm can be appreciated.

We feel it reasonable to assume that any reader of this journal is familiar with the body of material contained in this book. May we therefore suggest to him who would turn from *Three Prophets* in order to avoid duplication in his library, that he buy the book, remove the three addresses and give them to an embryonic Unitarian, while binding and keeping for himself Dr. Wright's introduction. It's that worthy!

VICTOR H. CARPENTER, JR.

The First Parish
Norwell, Mass.

Studia nad Arianizmem. (Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii.) Edited by LUDWIK CHMAJ. Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1959. 563 pp. Illustrated. zł. 90.

Like the movement itself, the scholarship dealing with Polish Anti-trinitarians has always had a marked international character. The book under review, a collection of papers published in connection with the three-hundredth anniversary of the expulsion in 1658 of Polish Brethren, bears this stamp as well: in addition to Polish we have here contributions from Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland and the USA, and while most papers are published in Polish and provided with English summaries, the reader has to switch occasionally to English, German and Italian.

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with personalities. Konrad Gorski gives a remarkably clear and well thought-out exposition of the evolution of the religious ideas of Frycz-Modrzewski, an important Polish social and religious thinker. T. R. Castiglione discusses the persecution of Valentino Gentile in Calvinist Geneva in 1558. Antal Pirnat's paper, entitled "Jacobus Palaeologus," deals in fact only with the Transylvanian period (1570-75) of the life of the Greek reformer, on which, however, thanks to the author's discovery of codices with Palaeologus' manuscript works, it manages to throw new light. Lech Szczucki's paper is a study of a hitherto little known minister and polemicist in Lithuania, Licinius Namyslowski. The late Ludwik Chmaj, the editor of the whole volume, analyzes the main ideas of Socinus' Rakow lectures. Two minor contributions, one by K. E. Jordt Jorgensen on Lubieniecki in Cracow in 1655, and another by Ladislao Laszloczly, a short biographical sketch of A. Lachowski from Moskorzow, conclude this part.

The second part, "Problems," is the most important of the whole book. G. H. Williams of Harvard, in a well-documented paper, stresses the importance of the hitherto neglected Anabaptist strand in the pre-Socinian phase of Polish Antitrinitarianism. Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa's study of "The Printing Presses of Cracow and Rakow in the Service of Antitrinitarianism," a model of thorough scholarship, is the closest approximation to and, let us hope, a forerunner of, the so much needed bibliography of Polish Antitrinitarian publications. Stanislaw Tync's "The Polish Brethren's College in Rakow" outlines the history of the famous school.

Stanislaw Przymkowski was obviously in a difficult situation while writing his paper on the studies of Polish Brethren in mathematics and physics: the paper, addressed to a non-specialist audience, had to be popular of necessity and at the same time had to satisfy the demands of a scholarly publication. One cannot, unfortunately, say that the author managed to reconcile successfully these conflicting demands. Zbigniew Ogonowski's "The Faith and Reason in the Religious Doctrines of the Socinians and John Locke" is to a large degree a convincing polemic against the views of Delio Cantimori who was playing down the import of Socinus in the history of religious rationalism. It is a pity that the author somehow overlooked H. McLachlan's *The Religious Opinions of Milton, Locke and Newton*, which is pertinent to his discussion. The last paper of this part, by Janusz Tazbir, analyzes the position taken by Polish Brethren in the Swedish war, 1655-1660, and the part the war played in their expulsion from Poland.

The book is concluded by the publication of new Latin source material presented and masterfully introduced by Henryk Barycz and the editor himself.

All in all, this is a valuable publication, rich in new ideas and data, and is, perhaps, the most important in the field after the appearance in 1946 of the first volume of E. M. Wilbur's *A History of Unitarianism*.

WIKTOR WEINTRAUB

Harvard University

[Reprinted from *Church History*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, March, 1961, with permission.]

Listy (Letters). By FAUST SOCYN (SOCINUS). Edited by LUDWIK CHMAJ. Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1959. Two volumes. zl. 160.

Recently, through the efforts of the Polish Academy of Education in Warsaw, there have appeared all the heretofore uncovered letters of Faust Socyn. It is the first edition written in the Polish language, since all the previous ones were published in Latin. This collection is particularly noteworthy since it contains many letters just discovered, which were unpublished in previous editions. Faust Socyn was a very prolific letter writer; however, a large majority of his works have disappeared. Walenty Szmalc had preserved approximately 200 of his epistles, but, unfortunately, the majority of these were also lost. Although most of his letters were written in Italian, the first publication was printed in Latin, and published most likely by his friend Walenty Szmalc, in 1618 in Rakow, Poland. Later, other letters were also published in Latin, in Poland and also in Holland, in 1656. To the previously published letters there have been added 13 letters, which have been found in Rumania, Italy, and other countries. Two of these are copies of original letters which are preserved in Cluj, Rumania. In this edition there are letters which have been written not only by Socyn himself, but also letters written to him, by many of his friends. His correspondence includes many letters which were written to his Polish Brethren and others written to many of his friends in other countries. Many of these are merely short personal notes, while others are large discourses upon religious matters, and are practically treatises in themselves, covering in length over 60 pages. For example, the letter written to Jan Niemojewski is a 68 page debate on Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

This edition of the letters has been arranged in chronological order, translated from the original Italian or from the first Latin edition. Likewise, each letter is accompanied by an explanatory footnote, which greatly facilitates understanding the text. Also, there is, at the beginning, a short biography of Faust Socyn, written in approximately 1631, by the well known writer of the Polish Brethren, Samuel Przypkowski, and published in 1634, in Latin, anonymously. It has been translated into many languages, and was published in the English language in 1651. This volume of the letters of Faust Socyn is a valuable source of historical documentation of the reformation. It reveals a true picture of the religious ideas in Polish territory, which was the cradleland of the free religious movement which is today called Unitarianism.

JOSEPH ALLEN

*The First Parish Unitarian
Hubbardston, Mass.*

[Reprinted from *Church History*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, March, 1961, with permission.]

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE UNITARIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INDEX OF ARTICLES

1947 - 1961

(Book Reviews are omitted)

(Note: Single copies of issues containing the following articles are available to members of the Society without charge as long as the supply lasts. Back issues are available to libraries at \$2.00 per issue. Issues prior to Volume VII (1947) are out of print and not available.)

- Bockoven, J. Sanbourne, "The Unitarian Contribution to the Early History of American Psychiatry," 1959.
- Brooks, Alfred M., "The First Parish in Gloucester, 1642-1942," 1947.
- Brooks, Lawrence G., "Frederick May Eliot As I Knew Him," 1960.
- Curti, Merle, "Our Golden Age" (An address commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the First Unitarian Church, Madison, Wisconsin), 1957.
- DeVries, F. C., "The Influence of Parker on European Thought," 1960.
- Downing, A. B., "Unitarian Theological Schools in England and Wales," 1959.
- Eliot, Christopher R., "History of the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers, 1887-1941," 1947.
- Eliot, Frederick M., "Tensions in Unitarianism One Hundred Years Ago," 1947.
- Foote, Henry W., "Marion Franklin Ham," 1958.
- _____, "The Historical Background of the Present King's Chapel," 1950.
- Freeman, Melville C., "The First Congregational Parish in Kennebunk, Maine, 1750-1951," 1952.
- Gibson, George H., "Unitarian Congregations in the Ante-Bellum South," 1959.
- Girelius, Charles G., "Francis Adrian van der Kemp, Unitarian Pioneer," 1950.
- Herbst, Jurgen, "Francis Greenwood Peabody: A Bibliography," 1961.
- Hersey, Benjamin B., "The Universalist Church in America," 1956.
- Holt, Anne, "Some English Dissenters and their American Friends," 1953.
- Horton, Douglas, "The Scrooby Covenant," 1957.
- Hudson, Herbert E., "Recent Interpretations of Parker: An Evaluation of the Literature Since 1936," 1960.
- _____, "The Quest for the Historical Parker," 1961.
- Hutchison, William R., "Theodore Parker and the Transcendentalist Controversy: A Letter to the Editor of *The Proceedings*," 1961.

- Isely, Jeter A. and Elizabeth R., "A Note on George Ripley and the Beginnings of New England Transcendentalism," 1961.
- Kot, Stanislaw, "The Reformation in Poland," 1956.
- Kucheman, Clark, "John Goodwin and John Biddle: Rational Theology and the Transformation of Puritanism," 1961.
- Laws, John W., "A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Theodore Parker," 1960.
- McGehee, Charles W., "Minot Judson Savage: Rebuilder of Faith," 1961.
- MacNab, John E., "Unitarians and Socialistic Ideas in the United States Prior to 1860," 1953.
- Mead, Sidney E., "An Address to Unitarians," 1958.
- , "The Historian's History: A Pathway to Freedom," 1958.
- Merriam, John McKinstry, "The First Parish in Framingham 1701-1951," 1952.
- Meserve, Harry C., "The First Unitarian Society of San Francisco, 1850-1950," 1951.
- Nelson, Truman, "Parker as Revolutionary Moralist: From Divinity Hall to Harpers Ferry," 1960.
- Parke, David B., "The Present State of Unitarian and Universalist Historical Studies," 1958.
- , "Unitarianism at Antioch College 1853-1953," 1954.
- Scovel, Carl R., "Theodore Parker: The Man as a Minister," 1960.
- Shepherd, Holley M., "Unitariana," 1958.
- Small, Carleton P., "Unitarianism in Maine," 1950.
- Walker, Frank, "Ecumenicity and Liberty: The Contribution of Henry W. Bellows to the Development of Post-Civil War Unitarianism," 1961.
- Weis, Frederick L., "Apostolic Succession," 1951.
- , "Samuel Atkins Eliot," 1952.
- Wilbur, Earl Morse, "How the History Came to be Written," 1951.
- Worthley, Harold F., "The Colonial Diaconate," 1959.
- , "An Historical Essay: The Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers," 1958.
- Wright, Conrad, "The Rediscovery of Channing," 1959.

ANNUAL MEETING — 1960

The sixtieth annual meeting of the Unitarian Historical Society was called to order in the Hale Chapel of the First Church in Boston, Sunday, May 22, 1960, at 4:05 p. m. Dr. Conrad Wright of Harvard Divinity School, a director of the Society, presided in the absence of the President, Dr. Howlett.

On motion duly seconded, the minutes of the 1959 annual meeting were approved as printed in the current issue of *The Proceedings*.

The assistant secretary described the work of the Society during the year. Membership now totals 292 plus 21 libraries for a total of 313. A seminar was held March 15, 1960 at the Colonial Society in Boston, the Rev. Charles W. McGehee of West Upton (now of Jacksonville, Fla.) speaking on "Minot Judson Savage: Rebuilder of Faith." Dr. Arnold Crompton of Oakland, an honorary vice president of the Society, has been appointed editor of the Earl Morse Wilbur papers. The Society has participated in the centennial and sesquicentennial observance of Theodore Parker (1810-1860), *The Proceedings* for 1960, Volume XIII, Part I, being devoted to Parker. The creation of an annual Earl Morse Wilbur Prize of \$250 for "a distinguished contribution in Unitarian history" was announced. Manuscripts must be submitted by January 1, 1961 to the Editor of *The Proceedings*.

The Treasurer's report, showing a balance (May 1, 1959) of \$2,633.64, receipts of \$603.01, expenditures of \$1,318.48, and a new balance (April 30, 1960) of \$1,918.17 was approved.

Mr. James Tanis, Librarian of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library in Cambridge, spoke briefly concerning the Library's activities in collecting, cataloguing and making available Unitarian materials. Of special interest was the recent acquisition of portions of the libraries of the Arlington Street Church and of Dr. Henry Wilder Foote, and efforts toward a comprehensive index of Dr. Earl Morse Wilbur's bibliography of Unitarianism by the Rev. Holley M. Shepherd.

The report of the Nominating Committee was presented by the Rev. J. Arnold Mcardon of Melrose, as follows:

<i>For President</i>	Dr. Duncan Howlett
<i>For Vice President</i>	Rev. David B. Parke
<i>For Secretary</i>	Rev. Rhys Williams
<i>For Treasurer</i>	Dudley H. Dorr, Esq.
<i>For Directors</i> (1960-1963)	Dr. Conrad Wright Mr. Stephen Phillips
<i>For Honorary Vice Presidents</i>	Dr. Arnold Crompton Dr. Sidney E. Mead

On motion duly seconded it was voted to close nominations and to instruct the assistant secretary to cast one ballot for the slate, which was declared unanimously elected.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p. m. The speaker of the day was Mr. Herbert E. Hudson of Berkeley, Calif. who addressed the meeting on the subject: "The Quest for the Historical Parker."

Respectfully submitted,

DUDLEY H. DORR, *Secretary*

by DAVID B. PARKE, *Assistant Secretary*

The Unitarian Historical Society announces the
SECOND ANNUAL
EARL MORSE WILBUR PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION

\$250.00

to be given for "a distinguished contribution in Unitarian history." The manuscript may be of any length, but not less than twenty typewritten pages. All essays must be submitted by January 1, 1962 to the Rev. David B. Parke, Atwood Hall, St. Lawrence University, Canton, N.Y.

Papers submitted but not receiving the prize may be read at one of the seminars of the Historical Society, or published in *The Proceedings*, or both. The Executive Committee of the Historical Society will act as judges.

THE UNITARIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY announces the appointment of the Rev. A. B. Downing as European subscription agent for *The Proceedings*. Inquiries and subscription applications may be addressed to Mr. Downing at The Great Meeting, East Bond Street, Leicester, England. Annual subscriptions are \$2.00 or equivalent. The subscription year begins May 1.

The Editor

**THEOLOGY LIBRARY
CLAREMONT, CALIF.**

THE UNITARIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY was founded in 1901 and incorporated in Massachusetts in 1958 to collect and preserve books, pamphlets, periodicals, manuscripts and pictures which describe and illustrate the history of Unitarianism; to stimulate an interest in the preservation of the records of Unitarian churches; and to publish material dealing with the history of individual churches, or of the Unitarian movement as a whole.

The Society's collection is housed at the Unitarian Historical Library, 25 Beacon St., Boston. Books may be consulted at the Library, and certain volumes are available on Inter-Library Loan. For information consult the Librarian.

Seminars on aspects of Unitarian and liberal religious history are held in the Fall, Winter and Spring. Members are invited to participate. Most seminar papers are published in the *Proceedings*.

The Society welcomes into membership all who are in sympathy with its aims and work. Persons desiring to join should send their membership fee to the Treasurer.

Annual membership	\$ 2.00
Sustaining membership	\$10.00
Life membership	\$50.00

Each member, whether individual or institutional (i. e. a Unitarian church or Unitarian fellowship), receives a copy of the *Proceedings*. A number of libraries receive the *Proceedings* gratis, and requests are welcomed.

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